



This ebook was downloaded from The Digital Library.





Walter Scott
SCENES

AND

LEGENDS

OF

THE NORTH OF SCOTLAND,

OR THE

TRADITIONAL HISTORY OF CROMARTY.

BY

HUGH MILLER.

Much with hoary men
He walked conversing, and sedately glad,
Heard stories which escap'd historic pen.

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

EDINBURGH:

ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK.

LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMAN,
LONDON.

M,DCCC,XXXV.

GR
145
C76M614

DEDICATION

TO

SIR THOMAS DICK LAUDER,

OF GRANGE AND FOUNTAINHALL, BARONET.

HONOURED SIR,

I am not much acquainted with what Goldsmith has termed the ceremonies of a dedication. I know, however, that, like other ceremonies, they are sometimes a little tedious, and often more than a little insincere. But it is well that though dulness be involuntary, no one need deceive unless he wills it. There are comparatively few who seem born to think vigorously, or to express themselves well ; but since all men may be honest, though all cannot be original or elegant, every one, surely, may express only what he feels. In dedicating this little volume to you, I obey the dictates of a real, though, perhaps, barren gratitude ; nor can I think of the kind interest which you have taken in my amusements as a writer, and my fortunes as a man, without feeling that though I may be dull, I cannot be insincere.

516322
LIB SETS

And there are other motives which have led to this address. He who dedicates, more than expresses his gratitude ; he intimates also, by his choice of a Patron, the character of those whom he would fain choose for his readers ; or, as I should perhaps rather express myself, that specific cast of intellect, and peculiar range of acquirement from which he anticipates the justest appreciation of his labours, and the deepest interest in the subject of them. Need I say that I regard you as a representative of the class whom it is most my ambition to please. My stories form a kind of vista into the past. Where shall I find one better qualified to decide regarding the truth of the scenery, the justness of the perspective, or the proportions and costume of the figures, than he whom cotemporary genius has so happily designated as the “ Poet and Painter of the great Morayshire Floods ?” I have attempted to portray character : if with success, the approval of no one shall gratify me more than that of him who drew the Wolf of Badenoch. Occasionally, too, in tracing those impressions of past events which I find stamped on the face of our country, I have been led to speculate on the revolutions of a period with which the youngest of all the sciences is alone conversant. And to whom should I rather choose to submit my gleanings on this interesting though obscure field, than to the author of the Dissertation on the parallel roads of Glen-Roy ? I can form no higher wish, than that my work may prove

worthy of so discerning a critic, and that you, sir, may be as fortunate in your *protégé* as I in my patron.

In making choice of my subject I thus reasoned with myself:—White's Natural History of Selborne is a most popular little book, and deservedly so, though Selborne itself be but an obscure parish somewhere in the south of England. The very local title of the work has not in the least militated against its interest. But why? Partly, it would seem, from the very pleasing manner in which it is written; partly because the natural history of even a single parish may be regarded as that of the entire district in which the parish is included. And may not the germ of a similar popularity be found, if the writer fail not in his part, in the traditional history of a Scotch village? Which of all the animals is a more interesting study than man? or, can those varieties of any of their numerous classes which we find in one district of country be more clearly identified with the varieties which we find in another, than we can identify with one another those multiform classes of the human character, which, though everywhere different in their minor traits, are everywhere alike in their more important? Besides,—the history of one Scotch village is, in some measure, the history of every one;—nay more, it may form a not unimportant portion of that of the kingdom at large. The people of Scotland, in all its several districts, have been moving forward throughout the last century over

nearly the same ground, though certainly not at the same pace ; and a faithful detail of the various changes and incidents which have occurred during their march from what they were in the past to what they are in the present, cannot surely be merely local in its interest. What does it matter that we examine only a little part of any substance, if from that part we acquire an ability to judge of the whole ? The chemist can subject but comparatively small portions of his earths or metals to the test of experiment, but of how wide an application are the laws which he discovers in the process !

Perhaps the conception which I thus formed of my task was somewhat too high to leave me any great chance of satisfying myself in the execution of it. I have, at least, not done so, and, indeed, could be almost sorry if I had. I have frequently met with an ingenious argument for the immortality of the soul, drawn from the dissatisfaction which it always experiences in the imperfect good of the present, and from its fondly cherished expectations of a more complete good in the future ; and so long as I am dissatisfied with what I write, and with how I think, I solace myself, on a nearly similar principle, with the hope that I shall one day write better, and think more justly. My Traditional History, however, is, I trust, a not very common-place one ; it is a different sort of work, in some respects, from any of a merely local cast,

which I have yet chanced to see ; and I am of opinion, though possibly misled by that partiality which men almost insensibly form for any pursuit in which they have long been engaged, that a set of works of a similar character, would not be quite without its use in the literature of our country. I have recorded in my little work many of the stories connected with Cromarty, which, in the past ages, were deemed of interest enough to be transmitted to the present. Some of these are evidently founded on circumstances which have occurred in real life ; some of them seem to have sprung out of minds darkened by ignorance and superstition, as Minerva is said to have done out of the head of Jupiter ; some of them may be considered as the fragments of codes of belief that have long since fallen into desuetude. Now, however small the value of such may prove, viewed as they are in themselves, may they not be of some interest regarded as materials for the poet and the novelist ? The occurrences of even common life constitute, if one may so speak, a kind of alphabet of invention,—the types rather which Genius employs in setting up her *forms*. She picks them out in little broken bits from those cells of the memory in which they have been stored up, and composes with them entire, and very beautiful pieces of fiction. And I am convinced that a set of works similar in character to my Traditional History,—one from each district of the kingdom,—would form a complete *font* of

this kind. Might not such a set be properly regarded as a magazine of materials for Genius to work upon !

I am, I trust, no hypocrite in literature, but a right-hearted devotee to whom composition is quite its own reward. If my little volume succeed, I shall be gratified by reflecting that the pleasure derived from it has not been confined to myself ; if it fail, there will surely be some comfort in the thought that it has proved, to at least one mind, a copious source of entertainment. Besides, I am pretty sure I shall be sanguine enough to transfer to some production of the future, the few hopes which, in the past, I had founded on it. And when thinking of it as the “ poor deceased,” I reflect that, at worst, it was rather dull than wicked, and that it rather failed in performance, than erred in intention ; I shall not judge the less tenderly regarding it, when I farther remember that it procured for me the honour of your notice, and furnished me with this opportunity of subscribing myself,

Honoured Sir,

with sincere gratitude and respect,

your humble friend,

and obedient servant,

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS.

	Page
CHAPTER I.	
My old Library and its Contents. The Three Classes of Traditions. Legend of Sludach. Singular Test of Character. The Writer's Pledge,	1
CHAPTER II.	
The Extinct Spectres. Legend of Morial's-den. The Guardian Cock,	12
CHAPTER III.	
Fabulous History. Alypas. Etymological Legends. Epic Poetry of the Middle Ages. Astorimon. The Spectre Ships. Olaus Rudbeck,	22
CHAPTER IV.	
The Bay of Cromarty. The Antiquary of the World, . .	44

	Page
CHAPTER V.	
The Old Coast Line. The Old Town. Storms of the Five Winters. Donald Miller's Wars with the Sea,	65
CHAPTER VI.	
Macbeth. Our older data. The Fions of Knock-Ferril. The King's Sons. Obelisks of Easter Ross. Dunskaith. The Urquharts of Cromarty. Wallace. The Foray of the Clans. Paterhemon,	80
CHAPTER VII.	
The Old Mythology. The Devotional Sentiment. Interesting usages. Rites of the Scottish Halloween. The Charm of the Egg. The Twelfth-rig. Macculloch's Courtship,	104
CHAPTER VIII.	
A Scottish Town of the Seventeenth Century. The Old Castle of the Urquharts. Hereditary Sheriffship,	125
CHAPTER IX.	
Sir Thomas Urquhart,	138
CHAPTER X.	
The Reformation. Outbreaking at Rosemarkie. Sir John Urquhart of Craigfintrie. The Outed Ministers. Mr. Fraser of Brea. Luggie,	157

CHAPTER XI.

The Curates. Donald Roy of Nigg. The Breaking of the Burgh. George Earl of Cromartie. The Union,	181
---	-----

CHAPTER XII.

Important events which affect the Religious Character. Kenneth Ore. Thomas Hogg and the Man-horse. The Watchmen of Cullicuden. The Lady of Ardvrock. The Lady of Balconie,	198
---	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

The Story of John Feddes. Andrew Lindsay, . . .	222
---	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

The Chapel of St. Regulus. Macleod the Smuggler. The Story of Sandy Wood,	241
--	-----

CHAPTER XV.

The Economy of Accident. The Black Years. Progress of the Pestilence. The Quarantine. The Cholera,	256
---	-----

CHAPTER XVI.

Martmas Market. The Herring Drove. The Whale Fishers. The Flight of the Drove. Urquhart of Green- hill. Poem,	275
---	-----

	Page
CHAPTER XVII.	
Sandy Wright and the Puir Orphan,	289
CHAPTER XVIII.	
Employments of the Townspeople. Tarbat Ness. <i>Stine</i> <i>Bheag</i> o' Tarbat,	304
CHAPTER XIX.	
The Bad Year. Sandison's Spuilzie. The Meal Mob, . . .	317
CHAPTER XX.	
The Forty-Five. Nannie Miller's Onslaught. The Battle of Culloden. Old John Dunbar. Jacobite Psalm, . . .	335
CHAPTER XXI.	
Wars of the Townspeople. Macculloch the Lawyer. The Law Plea. Roderick and the Captain. Mr. Henderson,	348
CHAPTER XXII.	
The Literati of Cromarty. Johnie o' the Shore. Johnie's Imagination on the Thunder Claps. Meggie o' the Shore. David Henderson. Macculloth of Dunloth, . . .	367

SCENES AND LEGENDS.

THE TRADITIONAL HISTORY OF CROMARTY.

CHAPTER I.

Tradition is a meteor, which, if once it falls, cannot be rekindled.

JOHNSON.

I HAVE long deemed it more than probable, that extremes meet in the intellectual as certainly as in the moral world ;—nor, paradoxical as the opinion may appear, have I taken it up for the sake of being singular. It was at first forced upon me by circumstances ; and I cannot now so much as glance over the little magazine of facts and inferences, which comprises almost the whole of my mental possessions, without receiving some new proof of its truth. My greatest benefactors have been the philosophic Bacon, and an ignorant old woman who, of all the books ever written, was acquainted with only the Bible.

When a little fellow of about ten or twelve years of age, I was much addicted to reading ; but found it no easy matter to gratify the propensity ; until, having

made myself acquainted with some people in the neighbourhood who were possessed of a few volumes, I was permitted to ransack their shelves, to the no small annoyance of the bookworm and the spider. I read incessantly ; and as the appetite for reading, like every other kind of appetite, becomes stronger the more it is indulged, I felt, when I had consumed the whole, a still keener craving than before. I was quite in the predicament of the shipwrecked sailor, who expends his last morsel when on the open sea, and like him too, I set myself to prey on my neighbours. Old grey-headed men, and especially old women, became my books ;—persons whose minds not having been preoccupied by that artificial kind of learning, which is the result of education, had gradually filled, as they passed through life, with the knowledge of what was occurring around them, and with the information derived from people of a similar cast with themselves, who had been born half an age earlier. And it was not long before I at least *thought* I discovered that their narratives had only to be translated into the language of books, to render them as interesting as even the better kind of written stories. They abounded with what I deemed as true delineations of character, as pleasing exhibitions of passion, and as striking instances of the vicissitudes of human affairs—with the vagaries of imaginations as vigorous, and the beliefs of superstitions as wild. Alas ! the epitaph of the famous American Printer may now be written over the greater part of the volumes of this my second library ; and so unfavourable is the present age to the production of more, that even that wise provision of nature which

implants curiosity in the young, while it renders the old communicative, seems abridged of one half its usefulness. For though the young must still learn, the old need not teach ;—the press having proved such a supplanter of the past-world schoolmaster, Tradition, as the spinning wheel was in the last age to the distaff and spindle. I cannot look back on much more than twenty years of the past, and yet in that comparatively brief space, I see the stream of tradition rapidly lessening as it flows onward, and displaying, like those rivers of Africa, which lose themselves in the burning sands of the desert, a broader and more powerful volume as I trace it towards its source.

It has often been a subject of regret to me, that this oral knowledge of the past, which I deem so interesting, should be thus suffered to be lost. The meteor, says my motto, if it once fall, cannot be rekindled. Perhaps had I been as conversant five years ago with the art of the writer, as with the narratives of my early monitors, no one at this time of day would have to entertain a similar feeling ; but I was not so conversant with it, nor am I yet, and the occasion still remains. The Sibylline tomes of tradition are disappearing in this part of the country one by one ; and I find, like Selkirk in his island, when the rich fruits of autumn were dropping around him, that if I myself do not preserve them, they must perish. I therefore set myself to the task of storing them up as I best may, and urge as my only apology, the emergency of the case. Not merely do I regard them as the produce of centuries, and like the blossoms of the Aloe, interesting on this account alone, but also as a species of

produce, which the harvests of future centuries may fail to supply. True it is, that superstition is a weed indigenous to the human mind, and will spring up in the half cultivated corners of society in every coming generation ; but then the superstitions of the future may have little in common with those of the past. True it is, that human nature is intrinsically the same in all ages and all countries ; but then it is not so with its ever varying garb of custom and opinion, and never again may it wear this garb in the curious obsolete fashion of a century ago.—Geologists tell us that the earth produced its plants and animals at a time when the very stones of our oldest ruins existed only as mud or sand ; but they were certainly not the plants and animals of Linnæus or Buffon.

The traditions of this part of the country, and of perhaps every other, may be divided into three great classes. Those of the first and simplest class are strictly local ; they record real events, and owe their chief interest to their delineations of character. Those of the second are pure inventions. They are formed mostly after a set of models furnished, perhaps, by the later bards, and are common, though varying in different places according to the taste of the several imitators who first introduced them, or the chance alterations they afterwards received, to almost every district of Scotland. The traditions of the third and most complex class are combinations of the two others, with, in some instances, a dash of original invention, and in others, a mixture of that superstitious credulity, which can misconceive as ingeniously as the creative faculty can invent. The value of stories of the first class is

generally in proportion to their truth, and there is a simple test by which we may ascertain the degree of credit proper to be attached to them. There is a habit of minute attention almost peculiar to the common people, (in no class, at least, is it more perfect than in the commonest) which leads them to take a kind of microscopic survey of every object suited to interest them ; and hence their narratives of events which have really occurred, are as strikingly faithful in all the minor details, as Dutch paintings. Not a trait of character, not a shade of circumstance is suffered to escape. Nay more,—the *dramatis personæ* of their little histories are almost invariably introduced, to tell their own stories in their own language. And though this be the easiest and lowest style of narrative, yet to invent in this style is so far from being either low or easy, that, with the exception of Shakspeare, and one or two more, I know not any who have excelled in it. Nothing more common than those faithful memories which can record whole conversations, and every attendant circumstance, however minute ; nothing less so than that just conception of character and vigour of imagination, which can alone construct a natural dialogue, or depict, with the nice pencil of truth, a scene wholly fictitious. And thus, though any one, even the weakest, can mix up falsehoods with the truths related in this way, not one of a million can make them amalgamate. The iron and clay, to use Bacon's illustration, retain their separate natures, as in the feet of the image, and can as easily be distinguished.

The traditions of the second class, being in most instances only imperfect copies of extravagant and ill-

conceived originals, are much less interesting than those of the first ; and such of them as are formed on the commoner models, or have already, in some shape or other, been laid before the public, I shall take the liberty of rejecting. A very few of them, however, are of a superior and more local cast, and these I shall preserve. Their merit, such as it is, consists principally in their structure as stories—a merit, I am disposed to think, which, when even at the best, is of no high order. I have observed that there is more of plot and counter plot in our commonest novels, and lowest kind of plays, than in the tales and dramas of our best writers ; and what can be more simple than the fables of the *Iliad* and the *Paradise Lost* !—From the third class of traditions I trust to derive some of my choicest materials. Like those of the first, they are rich in character and incident, and to what is natural in them and based on fact, there is added, as in Epic poetry, a kind of machinery, supplied either by invention or superstition, or borrowed from the fictions of the bards, or from the old classics. In one or two instances, I have met with little strokes of fiction in them, of a similar character with some of even the finest strokes in the latter, but which seem to be rather coincidences of invention, if I may so express myself, than imitations.—There occurs to me a story of this class which may serve to illustrate my meaning.

In the upper part of the parish of Cromarty there is a singularly curious spring, termed Sludach, which suddenly dries up every year early in summer, and breaks out again at the close of autumn. It gushes from the bank with an undiminished volume until

within a few hours before it ceases to flow for the season, and bursts forth on its return in a full stream. And it acquired this peculiar character, says tradition, sometime in the seventeenth century. On a very warm day of summer, two farmers employed in the adjacent fields were approaching the spring in opposite directions, to quench their thirst. One of them was tacksman of the farm on which the spring rises, the other tenanted a neighbouring farm. They had lived for some time previous on no very friendly terms. The tacksman, a coarse, rude man, reached the spring first, and taking a hasty draught, he gathered up a handful of mud, and just as his neighbour came up, flung it into the water. "Now," said he, turning away as he spoke, "you may drink your fill." Scarcely had he uttered the words, however, when the offended stream began to boil like a caldron, and after bubbling a while among the grass and rushes, sunk into the ground. Next day at noon, the heap of grey sand which had been incessantly rising and falling within it, in a little conical jet, for years before, had become as dry as the dust of the fields; and the strip of white flowering cresses which skirted either side of the runnel that had issued from it, lay withering in the sun. What rendered the matter still more extraordinary, it was found that a powerful spring had burst out on the opposite side of the frith, which at this place is nearly five miles in breadth, a few hours after the Cromarty one had disappeared. The story spread; the tacksman, rude and coarse as he was, was made unhappy by the forebodings of his neighbours, who seemed to regard him as one resting under a curse; and going to an elderly

person in an adjoining parish, much celebrated for his knowledge of the supernatural, he craved his advice. "Repair," said the seer, "to the old hollow of the fountain, and, as nearly as you can guess, at the hour in which you insulted the water, and after clearing it out with a clean linen towel, lay yourself down beside it, and abide the result. He did so, and waited on the bank above the hollow from noon until near sunset; when the water came rushing up with a noise like the roar of the sea, scattering the sand for several yards around; and then subsiding to its common level, it flowed on as formerly between the double row of cresses. The spring on the opposite side of the frith withdrew its waters about the time of the rite of the cleansing, and they have not since reappeared; while those of Sludach from that day to the present, are presented, as if in scorn, during the moister seasons, when no one regards them as valuable, and withheld in the seasons of drought, when they would be prized. We recognize in this singular tradition a kind of soul or Naiad of the spring, susceptible of offence, and conscious of the attentions paid it; and the passage of the waters beneath the sea reminds us of the river Alpheus sinking at Peloponnesus to rise in Sicily.

Next in degree to the pleasure I have enjoyed in collecting these traditions, is the satisfaction which I have had in contemplating the various cabinets, if I may so speak, in which I found them stored up according to their classes. For I soon discovered that the different sorts of stories were not lodged indiscriminately in every sort of mind,—the people who cherished the narratives of a particular cast, frequently rejecting those of

another. I found, for instance, that the traditions of the third class, with all their machinery of wraiths and witches, were most congenial to the female mind; and I think I can now perceive that this was quite in character. Women, taken in the collective, are more poetical, more timid, more credulous than men. If we but add to these general traits, one or two that are less so, and a few very common circumstances; if we but add a judgment not naturally vigorous, an imagination more than commonly active, an ignorance of books and of the world, a long cherished belief in the supernatural, a melancholy old age, and a solitary fire-side, we have compounded the elements of that terrible poetry which revels among skulls, and coffins, and enchantments, as certainly as Nature did when she moulded the brain of a Shakspeare. The stories of the second class I have almost never found in communion with those of the third, and never heard well told—except as jokes. To tell a story avowedly untrue, and to tell it as a piece of humour, requires a very different cast of mind from that which characterized the melancholy people who were the grand depositories of the darker traditions: they entertained these only because they deemed them mysterious and very awful truths, while they regarded open fictions as worse than foolish. Nor were their own stories better received by a third sort of persons, from whom I have drawn some of my best traditions of the first class, and who were mostly shrewd, sagacious men, who having acquired such a tinge of scepticism as made them ashamed of the beliefs of their weaker neighbours, were yet not so deeply imbued with it as

to deem these beliefs mere matters of amusement. They did battle with them both in themselves and the people around them, and found the contest too serious an affair to be laughed at. Now, however, (and the circumstance is characteristic) the successors of this order of people venture readily enough on telling a good ghost story, when they but get one to tell. Superstition, so long as it was living superstition, they deemed, like the live tiger in his native woods, a formidable, mischievous thing, fit only to be destroyed; but now that it has perished, they possess themselves of its skin and its claws, and store them up in their cabinets.

I have thus given a general character of the contents of my departed library, and the materials of my proposed work. My stories form a kind of history of the district of country to which they belong,—hence the title I have chosen for them; and to fill up some of those interstices which must always be occurring in a piece of history purely traditional, I shall avail myself of all the little auxiliary facts with which books may supply me. The reader, however, need be under no apprehension of meeting much he was previously acquainted with; and should I succeed in accomplishing what I have purposed, the local aspect of my work may not militate against its interest. Human nature is not exclusively displayed in the histories of great countries only, or in the actions of only celebrated men; and human nature may be suffered to assert its claim on the attention of the beings who partake of it, even though the specimens exhibited be furnished by the traditions of an obscure village. Much, however, de-

pend on the manner in which a story is told, and thus far may I vouch for the writer. I have seriously resolved not to be tedious, unless I cannot help it; and so, if I do not prove amusing, it will be only because I am unfortunate enough to be dull. I shall have the merit of doing my best,—and what writer ever did more? I pray the reader, however, not to form any very harsh opinion of me for at least the first four chapters, and to be not more than moderately critical on the two or three that follow. There is an obscurity which hangs over the beginnings of all history,—a kind of haze, which the writer can hardly avoid transferring from the first openings of his subject to the first pages of his book. He sees, through this haze, the men of an early period ‘like trees walking;’ and even should he believe them to be beings of the same race with himself, and of nearly the same shape and size,—a belief not always entertained, it is impossible for him, from the atmosphere which surrounds them, to catch those finer traits of form and feature by which he could best identify them with the species: and hence a necessary lack of interest.

CHAPTER II.

I have found again the fairy folk.

HOWITT.

I HAVE never yet visited one of our old ruinous castles or cathedrals, without employing my little professional knowledge in restoring it in idea to what it had been in its best days. Here, have I said to myself when bending over a heap of fragments and rubbish, is the foliage-bound capital of yonder pillar, and here a piece of the mailed effigy which once rested on the tomb beside it. This must have been the upper part of that reclining mullion ; this one of the labels of the neighbouring arch ; these mutilated corbels have run across the chasm above ; those caved mouldings along the breach below. And thus have I pieced the fragments together, repairing every broken wall, and rebuilding every ruined tower, until the edifice has risen before me like an exhalation, and the deep-ribbed arches have interposed between me and the sky. Often, however, after restoring the whole building, I have been sadly puzzled by heaps of residual materials, which it defied my little skill, and even my very imagination, to arrange or classify. To which of the turrets, have I asked, could this piece of cornice have belonged ? or where the niche of yonder mutilated saint ? Here are the remains of a hanging bartizan

which I can hang no where, and here the base of a double buttress, and the shaft of a twisted column, which I can furnish with no employment.

I have experienced something similar to this in arranging my traditions; for though I have found but little difficulty in building up the greater part of them, I have my little residual heap, which I cannot at all piece together. Some superstitions, like the extinct animals, have been so long dead, and are in consequence so broken and scattered, that not Cuvier himself could have described their entire appearance from the few mutilated parts of them that still survive. I must therefore pile up the fragments of such, just as they come to hand, and try—to return to my first figure—whether I cannot make at least a ruin of them; something very picturesque and puzzling, and suited to set people a-thinking. Really there are many less interesting things in the world than the ruins of an obsolete and dilapidated superstition. I have experienced much pleasure in tracing the lineage of a family of green ladies, or a tribe of water-wraiths; and as I pursued them from one country to another,—now nearly coming up with them as they harboured in the cottage of a peasant, now half overtaking them as they lingered in the groves of a priest, now all but seizing hold of them in some unfading creation of a poet,—I have been so delighted in the chase as almost to forget that the objects of it were at best, if I may so speak, but the shadows of phantoms, and never really existed any where, except in the darkened human mind. But I have derived a still deeper pleasure,—deeper, because linked with better and more serious feelings, in

tracing the downward course of these meteor-like spectres, until I had witnessed their gradual decline, and had then seen them go out in final extinction, one by one, as the day rose in the east. I have watched them as they vanished ; and, musing on the predictions of the prophets, and the hopes long entertained by good men, have felt that there is a scene of things approaching, better than either the present or the past. Lying oracles have again become silent as of old ; the great god Pan is dead, and not a faun or satyr survives to publish the tidings. When I glance over the history of the world, and think how very much the sum of human misery and degradation has been swelled by the monstrous despotism of Superstition, I can rejoice that I live in an age when her reign is so well nigh over. I feel how good a thing it is, that instead of having been fixed by destiny amid the gloomy and boisterous turmoil of an earlier period, my lot has been appointed me on the bright and tranquil verge of a happy future ; that I have been born to witness, with no darkened mind nor disturbed imagination, the last faint ripples of that storm which tempested the ocean of past time, and made shipwreck of human happiness, as they break, one by one, on the shores of the nineteenth century.

I have seen a large edition of the Newgate Calendar, furnished with portraits of the miscreants whose crimes the book narrated, and have amused myself by tracing in their countenances the ferocious or sinister expressions, indicative of their several characters. These people, thought I, were deemed unworthy to live, and yet their pictures are not only harmless, but

they gratify curiosity. It is thus with the savage horde of superstitions which once amazed and terrified the country, robbing people in the more recent periods, of their peace and comfort, and in the earlier, even of their lives: the transcripts are valuable, the originals not to be tolerated. Some of the more broken and dilapidated of these must have been not a little mischievous in their day, from the terror which they must have inspired. I have heard imperfectly preserved stories of a lady dressed in green, and bearing a goblin child in her arms, who used to wander in the night time from cottage to cottage, when all the inhabitants were asleep. She would raise the latch, it is said, take up her place by the fire, fan the embers into a flame, and then wash her child in the blood of the youngest inmate of the cottage, who would be found dead next morning. There was another wandering green lady, her cotemporary, of exquisite beauty and a majestic carriage, who was regarded as the Genius of the small-pox, and who, when the disease was to terminate fatally, would be seen in the grey of the morning, or as the evening was passing into night, sitting by the bedside of her victim. I have heard wild stories, too, of an unearthly, squalid looking thing, somewhat in the form of a woman, that used to enter farm houses during the day, when all the inmates, except perhaps a solitary female, were engaged in the fields. More than a century ago, it is said to have entered, in the time of harvest, the house of a farmer of Navity, who had lost nearly all his cattle by disease a few weeks before. The farmer's wife, the only inmate at the time, was engaged by the fireside in cooking for the reapers; the

goblin squatted itself beside her, and shivering, as if with cold, raised its dingy, dirty looking vestments over its knees. "Why, ye nasty thing," said the woman, "hae ye killed a' our cattle?"—"An' why," enquired the goblin in turn, "did the gudeman, when he last roosed them, forget to gie them his blessing?"

To the west of the town of Cromarty, the tract of table land which forms the greater part of the parish, terminates in a green sloping bank, that for several miles sweeps along the edge of the bay. We may see inscribed on its whole extent, though perhaps in obscure and doubtful characters, one of those stories of the Deluge, which we find recorded on every mountain, and in almost every valley. There are deep, water-worn ravines, now dry and grassy, which have been hollowed by the retiring waters, in rushing from the higher grounds to the lower, when the whole earth was a scene of cataracts and whirlpools; bluff eminences, too, jutting out from between these, crossed in horizontal lines by pathways that lead nowhere, and which must have been formed by the waves, as the line sunk lower and lower in the general ebb. In the immediate vicinity of the town the bank rises to the height of more than a hundred feet above the shore by which it is skirted, and is ridged and furrowed alternately with so much grave-like regularity, that one might almost imagine it part of an antediluvian churchyard, or a portion of the deserted battle field described by Milton. A little further to the west the line is broken by a deep valley, which runs a few hundred yards into the interior; 'tis a secluded, solitary place, the sides sprinkled over with the sea-hip,

the sloe, and the bramble,—the bottom occupied by a blind pathway, that, winding through the long grass like a snake, leads to the fields above. It has borne, from the earliest recollections of tradition, the name of *Morials-den*, a name which some, on the hint of Sir Thomas Urquhart, ingeniously derive from the Greek, and others, still more ingeniously, from the Hebrew ; and it has, for at least the last six generations, been a scene of bird-nesting and truant-playing during the day, and of witch and fairy meetings, it is said, during the night. Rather more than a century ago, it was the scene, says tradition, of an interesting rencounter with one of the unknown class of spectres. On a Sabbath noon a farmer of the parish was herding a flock of sheep in a secluded corner of the den. He was an old grey-haired man, who for many years had been affected by a deafness which grew upon him as the seasons passed, shutting out one variety of sounds after another, until at length he lived in a world of unbroken silence. Though secluded, however, from all converse with his brother men, he kept better company than ever, and became more thoroughly acquainted with his Bible, and the fathers of the Reformation, than he would have been had he retained his hearing, or than almost any other person in the parish. He had just despatched his herd-boy to church, for he himself could no longer profit by his attendance there ; his flock was scattered over the sides of the hollow ; and with his Bible spread out before him on a hillock of thyme and moss, which served him for a desk, and sheltered on either hand from the sun and wind by a thicket of sweetbrier and sloe-thorn, he was engaged

in reading, when he was startled by a low rushing sound, the first he had heard for many months. He raised his eyes from the book; a strong breeze was eddying within the hollow, waving the ferns and the bushes; and the portion of sea which appeared through the opening was speckled with white;—but to the old man the waves broke and the shrubs waved in silence. He again turned to the book, the sound was again repeated, and on looking up a second time, he saw a beautiful, sylph-looking female standing before him. She was attired in a long flowing mantle of green, which concealed her feet, but her breast and arms, which were of exquisite beauty, were uncovered. The old man laid his hand on the book, and raising himself from his elbow, fixed his eyes on the face of the lady. “Old man,” said she, addressing him in a low sweet voice, which found prompt entrance at the ears that had so long been shut up to every other sound, “you are reading *the book*; tell me if there be any offer of salvation in it to *us*.”—“The gospel of this book,” said the man, “is addressed to the lost children of Adam, but to the creatures of no other race.” The lady shrieked as he spoke, and gliding away with the rapidity of a swallow on the wing, disappeared amid the recesses of the hollow.

About a mile further to the west, in an inflection of the bank, there is the scene of a story, which, belonging to a still earlier period than the one related, and wholly unlike it in its details, may yet be deemed to resemble it in its mysterious, and, if I may use the term, unclassified character.

A ship-master, whose vessel was moored in the

roadstead of the bay, was sitting alone on deck one night, sometime about the middle of the seventeenth century, awaiting the return of some of his seamen who had gone on shore. The night was calm and starry,—the scene one of those exquisite sea scenes which we can connect so pleasingly with such sailors as the author of ‘*The Shipwreck*.’ There was one firmament of sky, and another of sea, each lighted up in quiet triumph by its thousand lamps and cressets,—streaming and flaring in the one, with every slight undulation of surface, and twinkling in the other, like lights in a sepulchre. Between the two firmaments there was a dark, unequal line of hills, which seemed to bind them together, while the vessel, like a little planet, appeared as if suspended in the midst. The ship-master, however, was no Falconer; he was merely a blunt sailor, full of the careless curiosity and credulous superstition of his profession. In the early part of the night he had amused himself by watching the lights that twinkled from the villages and farm houses that lined the shore, or in listening in the extreme stillness of the calm, to the distant lowing of cattle, or the short, shrill bark of the watch-dog. As the hour wore later, the sounds ceased, and the lights disappeared,—all but one solitary taper, that twinkled from the window of a cottage situated about two miles west of the town. The bay was spread out before it; the green, and at this place, wooded ridge, rose behind. Suddenly a hissing noise was heard overhead; the ship-master looked up, and saw one of those meteors that are termed falling stars, slanting athwart the heavens in the direction of the cottage. It in-

creased in size and brilliancy as it neared the earth, until the wooded ridge and the shore could be seen as distinctly from the cottage as by day. A dog howled piteously in one of the out-houses, an owl whooped from the wood. The meteor descended until it almost touched the roof, when a cock crew from within. Its progress seemed instantly arrested ; it stood still ; rose about the height of a ship's mast, and then began again to descend. The cock crew a second time. It rose as before, and after mounting much higher, sunk yet again in the line of the cottage. It almost touched the roof, when a faint clap of wings was heard, as if whispered over the water, followed by a still louder note of defiance from the cock. The meteor rose, as if with a bound, and continuing to ascend until it was lost among the stars, did not again appear. Next night, however, at the same hour, the same scene was repeated in all its circumstances, though the shipmaster, as before, was the only spectator :—the meteor descended, the dog howled, the owl whooped, the cock crew. On the following morning he visited the cottage, and partly out of curiosity, partly from the desire of possessing so interesting a bird, he purchased the cock. Before night he sailed from the bay, and he did not return to it until about a month after.

On his voyage inwards he had no sooner doubled an intervening headland, than he stepped forward to the bows, to take a peep at the cottage : it had vanished. As he approached the anchoring ground, he could discern a heap of blackened stones, occupying the place where it had stood ; and he was informed, on going ashore, that it had been burnt to the ground,

no one knew how, on the very night he had quitted the bay. He had it immediately rebuilt and furnished, deeming himself, what one of the old schoolmen would have termed, the occasional cause of the disaster. About fifteen years ago there was dug up, near the site of the cottage, a human skeleton, with the scull and the bones of the feet lying together, as if the body had been doubled up when committed to the earth ; and this discovery led to that of the story, which, though at one time often repeated, and extensively believed, had been suffered to sleep in the memories of a few elderly people for nearly sixty years.

CHAPTER III.

Consider it warilie, rede aftiner than anis.

GAVIN DOUGLASS.

I HAVE been accustomed to regard the fabulous pages of history with so favourable an eye, as to deem them scarcely less instructive than such of its pages as contain nothing but what is strictly true. A knowledge of human nature is to be derived from both ;—in what is true we find it exhibited in the characters which the historian describes ; in what is false we see it displayed both in the historian himself, and the people for whom he wrote. He either assists us in our studies by bringing us acquainted with men, or he himself, and the age which credited his absurdities, become the objects of our study.

It has long since become a truism that the intellectual growth of nations resembles that of individuals. They pass from infancy through the intervening stages of boyhood and youth before they arrive at mid-age, and we find their judgment strengthening with every advance, until they reach this middle point of their progress. The fables of Boece and Fordun were deemed sufficiently credible by a people in their childhood ; and may be regarded as the legends of their nursery. Then comes boyhood ; and though a great deal, perhaps, of what has been credited by the child

will be rejected by the boy, he will yet continue to yield his belief to narratives which, though more probable in circumstance and appearance, have not the support of a more certain evidence. Buchanan is a writer of this stage. The witch and the astrologer occasionally occupy a space in the faith of even an after period ; but there is a gradual advance towards maturity ; until at length a Robertson comes forward in all the dignity of national manhood, to impart to us his knowledge of character and events. He repeats to us neither the legends which amused the infancy of a country, nor yet the unauthenticated narratives of its boyhood :—on the contrary his first page is occupied by what may be regarded as the epitaph of historical fiction. It is expressive of a philosophical regret that “history, which ought to record truth, and to teach wisdom, should so often set out with retailing falsehoods and absurdities.”

In perusing the fables of the early historians I have been led to compare them to those demi-gods of Grecian Mythology, who derived their lineage by the one parent from men, and by the other from the gods. The mother of *Æneas* was immortal, his father died before himself. It is thus with the fables. They are the offspring of a transient mode, and a permanent principle,—of that vanity which attends human nature through every stage both of barbarism and refinement, and of those manners and opinions which are peculiar to a people only a few degrees removed from savagism. Much of the interest which I have felt in the study of these legends, arose from my regarding them in this point of view, and from my having pored over their

strong and marked features, until I had traced in them the peculiar lineaments of both their parents.

And there is another point of view in which these legends of history become so interesting, as almost to challenge an equality in point of value with its details of fact. What may be inferred from them does not indeed bear so directly on the businesses of men ; but in the process of inference they afford as wholesome an exercise to the cogitative faculties. From the data furnished us by historical fact we become acquainted with what certain states of affairs naturally produce, and from our belief in the invariable succession of cause and effect, we anticipate from some present combination of circumstances a certain series of events similar to those which have been already produced by some corresponding combination of the past. The fictions of history furnish, like its truths, a wide field of comparison and inference. Like the the works of the poets, or those of any other class of writers, they are the legitimate objects of a philosophical criticism ; and should a critic set out to examine them, carrying along with him a knowledge of that spirit of imitation which is so natural to man, and fully aware that the faculty of original invention is one of the least common, he would be convinced that there is not less to be acquired in this department of his art than in almost any other. They are interesting too from their illustrating very happily that force of our second nature, custom, which gives to whole bodies of men, however different in their characters as individuals, the impress of one common mould, and which we term professional bias. The style of fiction ex-

hibited in them must have been acquired in the service of a Church in which there were frauds that were deemed pious. It was evidently the same bent of genius, trained in the same school, which at one period transported the house of the Virgin to a hill of Loretto, and at another a colony of Greeks and Egyptians to the shores of Ireland.

The histories of single districts of country rarely ascend into so remote an antiquity as to be lost like those of nations in the ages of fable. But it so happens, whether fortunately or otherwise, for the writer, that in this respect the old shire of Cromarty differs from every other in the kingdom. Sir Thomas Urquhart, an ingenious native of this district, who flourished about the middle of the seventeenth century, has done for it all that the chroniclers and senachies of England and Ireland have done for their respective countries. And as he united to a vigorous imagination a knowledge of what is excellent in character, instead of peopling it with the caco-demons of the one kingdom, or the resuscitated antediluvians of the other, he has bestowed upon it a longer line of heroes and demi-gods than can be exhibited by the annals of either. I avail myself of his writings on the strength of that argument which O'Flaherty uses in his *Ogygia* as an apology for one of the best stories of his book,—the story of the three fishermen who were driven by tempest into a haven of Ireland fifteen days before the universal deluge. “Where there is no room,” says this historian, “for just disquisition, and no proper field of enquiry, we must rely on the common suffrages of the writers of our country; to whose opinions I voluntarily subscribe.”

Alypos, the forty-third in a direct line from Japhet, was the first, says Sir Thomas, who discovered that part of Scotland which has since been known by the name of Cromarty. He was contemporary with Rehoboam, the fourth king of Israel, and a very extraordinary personage, independent of his merits as a navigator. For we must regard him as constituting a link which divides into ancestors and descendants, a chain that depends unbroken from the creation of Adam to the present times. It either includes, too, in itself, or serves to connect by its windings and involutions some of the most famous people of every age of the world. His grandmother was a daughter of Calcido the Tyrian, who founded Carthage, and who must have lived several ages before the Dido of Virgil; his mother travelled from a remote eastern country to profit by the wisdom of Solomon, and is supposed by many, says Sir Thomas, to have been the queen of Sheba. Nor were his ancestors a whit less happy in their friends, than in their consorts. There was one of them intimately acquainted with Nimrod, the founder of the Assyrian Empire, and the builder of Babel; another sat with Abraham in the door of his tent, sharing with him his feelings of sorrow and horror, when the fire of destruction was falling on the cities of the plain; a third, after accompanying Bacchus in his expedition to the Indies, and receiving from him in marriage the hand of Thymelica, his daughter, was presented with a rich jewel, when passing through Syria, by Deborah, the judge and prophetess of Israel. It might have been still in the family had not one of his descendants given it to Pentasilea, that queen of the Amazons who assisted the Trojans against Aga-

memnon. Buchanan has expressed his astonishment that the chroniclers of Britain, instead of appropriating to themselves honourable ancestors out of the works of the poets, should rather, through a strange perversity, derive their lineage from the very refuse of nations : Sir Thomas seems to have determined not to furnish a similar occasion of surprise to any future historian. There were princes of his family who reigned with honour over Achaia and Spain, and a long line of monarchs who flourished in Ireland before the expedition of Fergus I.

The era of Alypos was one of the most important in the history of Britain : It was that in which the inhabitants first began to build cities, and to distinguish their several provinces by different names. It witnessed the erection of the city of York, by one Elborak, a brother-in-law of Alypos, and saw the castle of Edinburgh founded by a contemporary chieftain of Scotland, who had not the happiness of being connected to him, and whose name has, therefore, been lost. The historian assigns too, to the same age, the first use of the term Olbion, as a name for the northern division of the island, a term which afterwards “by an Eolic dialect” came to be pronounced Albion, or Alybin ; and the first application of the name Sutors, from the Greek σωτηρις, *preservers*, to those lofty promontories which guard the entrance of the bay of Cromarty,—a fact which Aikman the historian recommends, with becoming gravity, to the consideration of Gaelic etymologists. Much of a similar character, as appears from Sir Thomas, could have been brought before their notice in the reign of Charles I.,

when, as he states in one of his treatises, the names of all places in the shire of Cromarty, whether promontories, fountains, rivers, or lakes, were of pure and perfect Greek. Since that time, however, many of these names have been converted into choice trophies of the learning and research of these very etymologists ;—even the derivation of the term Sutors has been disputed, but by the partizans of languages less ancient than either Greek or Gaelic. The one party write the contested dissyllable Suitors, the other Soutars, and defend their different modes of spelling, each by a different legend—a species of argument practised at one time with much ingenuity and success by the contending Orders of St. Dominic and Loyola.

The promontories which bear this name are nearly equal in height, but when viewed from the west they differ considerably in appearance. The one, easy of access, crowned with a thick wood of pine, divided into corn fields, and skirted at the base by a broad line of ash and elm, seems feminine in its character ; while the other, abrupt, stern, broken into precipices, and tufted with furze, is of a cast as decidedly masculine. Two lovers, of some remote age, in which, however, human nature was exactly the thing it is at present, had met by appointment in a field of Cromarty which commands a full view of the promontories in the aspect described. The young man urged his suit with the characteristic warmth of his sex ;—his mistress was timid and bashful. He accused her of indifference ; and with all the fervour of a passion which converts even common men into poets, he exclaimed,

pointing to the promontories, "See, Ada, they too are lovers,—they are hastening to embrace; and stern and rugged as that earle-hill of the north may seem to others, he is not reckoned so by his lady-hill of the south:—See how, with all her woods and her furrows, she advances to meet him."—"And think you," rejoined the maiden, entering into the poetry of the feeling, "that these tongueless *suitors* cannot express their mutual regards without the aid of language; or that that earle of the north, rude as he is, would once think of questioning the faith and affection of his advancing mistress, merely because she advances in silence?" This reply, say the people who contend for the English derivation of the word, furnished the promontories with a name; and as those alchemists of mind who can transmute etymology into poetry have not been produced everywhere, few names have anecdotes equally pleasing connected with their origin. The other legend is of a different character, and has a merit too peculiar to itself to be amenable to any known law of criticism.

In some age of the world, more remote than even that of Alypos, the whole of Britain was peopled by giants,—a fact amply supported by early English historians and the traditions of the north of Scotland. Diocletian, king of Syria, say the historians, had thirty-three daughters, who, like the daughters of Danaus, killed their husbands on their wedding night. The king, their father, in abhorrence of the crime, crowded them all into a ship, which he abandoned to the mercy of the waves, and which was drifted by tides and winds till it arrived on the coast of Britain,—then an

uninhabited island. There they lived solitary, subsisting on roots and berries, the natural produce of the soil, until an order of demons, becoming enamoured of them, took them for their wives ; and a tribe of giants, who must be regarded as the true aborigines of the country, if indeed the demons have not a prior claim, were the fruit of these marriages. Less fortunate, however, than even their prototypes the Cyclops, the whole tribe was extirpated a few ages after by Brutus the parricide, who, with a valour to which mere bulk could render no effectual resistance, overthrew Gog-Magog, and Termagol, and a whole host of others, with names equally terrible. Tradition is less explicit than the historians in what relates to the origin and extinction of the race, but its narratives of their prowess are more minute. There is a large and very ponderous stone in the parish of Edderton, which a giantess of the tribe is said to have flung from the point of a spindle across the Dornoch frith ; and another within a few miles of Dingwall, still larger and more ponderous, which was thrown from a neighbouring eminence by a person of the same family, and which still bears the marks of a gigantic finger and thumb impressed on two of its sides. The most wonderful, however, of all their achievements was that of a lady, distinguished even among the tribe as the *cailliach-mòre*, or great woman, who from a pannier filled with earth and stones, which she carried on her back, formed almost all the hills of Ross-shire. When standing on the site of the huge Ben-Vaichaird, the bottom of the pannier is said to have given way, and the contents falling through the opening, produced the hill, which owes its great height

and vast extent of base to the accident. Prior to the invasion of Brutus, the promontories of Cromarty served as work stools to two giants of this tribe, who supplied their brethren with shoes and buskins. They wrought together; for, being furnished with only one set of implements, they could not carry on their trade apart; and they used to fling these to each other across the opening of the frith, where the promontories are only about two miles asunder. In process of time the name *sontar*, a shoemaker, was transferred, by a common metonymy, from the craftsmen to their stools; and by this name they have ever since been distinguished. Such are the etymological legends of the Sutors, opposed each to the other, and both to the scholar-like derivation of Sir Thomas; which must be confessed, however, to have been at one time a piece of mere common-place, though it has since become learning.

I have seen in the museum of the Northern Institution a very complete collection of stone battle-axes, some of which have been formed little earlier than the last age, by the rude natives of America and the South Sea Islands, while others, which have been dug out of the cairns and tumuli of our own country, bear witness to the unrecorded feuds and forgotten battle-fields of twenty centuries ago. I was a good deal struck by the resemblance which they bear to each other;—a resemblance so complete, that the most practised eye can hardly distinguish between the weapons of the old Scot and the New Zealander. Both seem to have selected the same rude materials, employed the same imperfect implements, and wrought

after the same uncount model. But man in a savage state is the same animal everywhere, and his constructive powers, whether employed in the formation of a legendary story or of a battle-axe, seem to expatiate almost everywhere in the same rugged track of invention. For even the traditions of this first stage may be identified, like its weapons of war, all the world over. Mariner, in his account of the Tonga Islands, has told us that the natives pointed out to him a perforated rock, in the hollow of which they said, one of their gods, when employed in fishing, entangled his hook, and that, pulling lustily to disengage it, he pulled up the whole island (one of the largest of the groupe) from the bottom of the sea. Does not this singular story, and the wild legend of Ben-vaich-aird, though the product of ages and countries so widely separated, belong obviously to the same rude stage of invention?

There may be some little interest in tracing the footprints of what I may term the more savage traditions of a country in the earlier pages of its history, and in marking how they blend with its imperfect narratives of real but ill remembered events, on the one hand, and its mutilated imitations of the masterpieces of a classical literature, on the other. The fabulous pages of English history furnish, when regarded in this point of view, a singularly interesting field to the legendary critic. They are suited to remind him of those huts of the wild Arab, composed of the fragments of ruined grandeur, which the traveller finds amid the ruins of Palmyra and Balbec, and in which, as he prosecutes his researches, he sees

the capital totter over the architrave, and the base overtop the capital,—masses of turf heaped round the delicate volute which emulated in granite the curled tresses of a beautiful female, and the marble foliage of the acanthus crushed by the rude joist which bends under a roof of clay and rushes. Perhaps the reader may indulge me in a few brief remarks on this very curious subject.

Diocletian, as Buchanan justly remarks, is a second Danaus, and owes his existence to the story of his prototype; but the legend of the marriages of his daughters with an order of demons, which, according to that historian, the English have invented through a pride of emulating the Gauls and Germans, who derive their lineage from Pluto, does not appear to me to be so properly traced to its original. The oldest of all the traditions of Britain seem to be those which describe it as peopled at some remote era by giants;—they are the broken vestiges, it is possible, of those incidents of Mosaic history which are supposed to be shadowed out in the fables of the giants of Grecian mythology, or perhaps mutilated remains of the fables themselves. It seems more probable, however, that they should have originated in that belief common to the vulgar of all countries, that the race of men is degenerating in size and prowess with every succeeding generation, and that at some early period their bulk and strength must have been gigantic. Judging of them from their appearance, they must have been known in a very early age—an age as early perhaps as that of the stone battle-axe; and what more probable than that they should have attracted the notice

of the chroniclers? who would naturally consult tradition for the materials of their first pages. But tradition, though it records the achievements of the giants, is silent respecting their origin. A first link would therefore be wanting, which could only be supplied by imagination; and as, like every other class of writers, the chroniclers would find it easier to imitate than to invent, it is not difficult to conceive how, after having learned in their cloisters that in an early age of the world the sons of God had contracted marriages with the daughters of men, and that heroes and giants were the fruit of the connection—they should blend a legend imitative of this event with the stories of the giants of Britain. Their next employment, for it would be too bold an attempt to link so terrible a tribe to the people of their own times, would be to show how this tribe became extinct, and the manner in which the country was first peopled with men like themselves.

There is but one way in which any thing probable can be acquired concerning the origin of a people who have no early history; but the process is both difficult and laborious. There is another sufficiently easy, which barely reaches the possible, and which the historians of eight hundred years ago would have deemed the more eligible of the two. Instead of setting themselves to ascertain those circumstances by which the several families of men are distinguished, or to compare the language, character, and superstitions of the people of their own country with those of the different tribes of the continent, they would apply for such assistance as the imitator derives from his copy, to the

histories of other kingdoms. From their connection with the Latin church they would be conversant with Roman literature, and acquainted with the story of Æneas as related by the historians, and amplified and adorned by Virgil. One might almost anticipate from a knowledge of these circumstances, that their inventions for what may be termed the third link of their history, would bear some discernible resemblance to the early history of Rome. And such is evidently the case. The occasion of the wanderings of Brutus resembles that of the expatriation of Tydeus, or rather that of the madness of Œdipus, but he is the Æneas of England notwithstanding. His story is a kind of national epic. Cornæus is his Achates. He finds hostile Rutulians, headed by a Turnus, in the giants and their leader; and Britain is both his Italy and his Trinaeria, though, instead of fleeing from the Cyclops, he conquers them.

The legend of Scotland may also be regarded as a national epic. It is formed on the same model with the story of Brutus, but it has the merit of being a more skilful imitation, and there is nothing outrageously improbable in any of its circumstances. Galethus, its hero, is the Æneas of Scotland. He was the son of Cæcrops, the founder of Athens, and, like Romulus, made himself famous as a captain of robbers before he became the founder of a nation. Having repeatedly invaded Macedonia, and the neighbouring provinces of Greece, he was in imminent danger of being overpowered by a confederacy of the states he had injured, when, assembling his friends and followers, he retreated into Egypt, at a time when that

kingdom was ravaged from its southern boundary to the gates of Memphis by an army of Ethiopians. Assuming on the sudden a new character, he joined his forces to those of Pharaoh, gave battle to the invaders, routed them with much slaughter, pursued them into Ethiopia, and after a succession of brilliant victories over them, compelled them to sue for peace. On his return he was presented by the king with the hand of his daughter Scota, and made general in chief of all the forces of the kingdom. Disgusted, however, by the cruelties practised on the Israelites, and warned by Moses and an oracle of the judgments by which these cruelties were to be punished, he fitted out a fleet, and, accompanied by great numbers of Greeks and Egyptians, set sail from the river Nile, with the intention of forming a settlement on the shores of the Mediterranean. After a tedious voyage he arrived at a port of Numidia, where no better success awaited him than had been met with by Æneas in the scene of his first colony. Again putting to sea, he passed the pillars of Hercules, and after having experienced in the navigation of the straits dangers similar to those which appalled Ulysses when passing through the Straits of Messina, he landed in that part of Spain which has ever since been known by the name of Portugal. He found in this country a second Tiber in the river Munda, and a fierce army of Rutulians in the inhabitants. But his good fortune did not desert him. He vanquished his enemies in one decisive battle, dispossessed them of their fairest provinces, built cities, instituted laws, conquered and colonized Ireland, and, dying after a long and prosperous reign,

left his kingdom to his children. Prior to his decease his subjects, both Greeks and Egyptians, were termed Scots, from their having sunk their original designations in this name, out of courtesy to their queen *Scota*,—a name afterwards transferred to *Albyn* by a colony from Ireland, who took possession of it a few ages subsequent to the age of *Galethus*. Such is the fable of what may be regarded both as a national epic of Scotland, and as the most classical of all the imitations of the *Æneid* which were fabricated during the middle ages.

Sir Thomas has recorded nothing further of his ancestor *Alypos*, than that he followed up his discovery of *Cromarty* by planting it with a colony of his countrymen, who, though some of his ancestors had settled in Portugal several years before, seem to have been Greeks. Of sixteen of his immediate descendants, it is only known that they were born, and that they married,—some of them finding honourable consorts in Ireland, some in Greece, and one in Italy. The wife of that one was a sister of *Marcus Coriolanus*,—a daughter of *Agesilaus* the Spartan, a daughter of *Simeon Breck*, the first crowned king of the Irish Scots, a daughter of *Alcibiades*, the friend and pupil of *Socrates*, and a niece of *Lycurgus* the lawgiver, were wives to some of the others. Never was there a family that owed more to its marriages.

Nomaster, the son-in-law of *Alcibiades*, disgusted by the treatment which that great but ambitious statesman had received from his country, took leave of Greece, and, “after many dangerous voyages both by sea and land, he arrived at the harbour *Ochoner*,

now called Cromarty.” It owed its more ancient name to Bestius Ochoner, one of the sixteen immediate descendants of Alypos, and the father, says the genealogist, of the Irish O’Connors ; the name which it now bears is derived by Gaelic etymologists from the windings and indentations of its shores. Nomaster, immediately on his landing, was recognised by the colonists as their legitimate prince, and he reigned over them till his death, when he was succeeded by his son Astorimon, a valiant and accomplished warrior, in whom the genius and heroism of his grandfather seem to have been revived. And the events of his time were well suited to find him employment. For in this age an immense body of Scythians, after voyaging along the shores of Europe in quest of a settlement, were incited by the great natural riches of the country to make choice of Scotland ; and, pouring in upon its western coasts, they dispossessed the natives of some of their fairest provinces. But the little territory of Astorimon, though one of the invaded, was not one of the conquered provinces. The Scythians, under Ethus their general, intrenched upon an extensive moor, which now forms the upper boundary of the parish of Cromarty ; and the grandson of Alcibiades drew out his forces to oppose them. A battle ensued, in which the Scythian general was killed in single combat by Astorimon ; and his followers, dispirited by his death, and unable to contend with an army trained to every evolution of Greek and Roman discipline, were routed with immense slaughter. These Scythians afterwards became famous as the Picts of Scottish history ; and Ethus, their leader, is reckoned

their first king. Sir Thomas, to the details of this battle, which he terms the great battle of Farna, has added, that "the trenches, head-quarters, and castrametation" of the invading army can still be traced on a moor of Cromarty.

This moor, which a few years ago was an unappropriated common, but which has been lately divided among the proprietors whose lands border on it, has evidently at some remote period been a field of battle. It is sprinkled over with tumuli and little heathy ridges resembling the graves of a churchyard. The southern shore of the Cromarty frith runs almost parallel to it for nearly fourteen miles; and upon a hill in the parish of Resolis, which rises between it and the frith, and which is separated from it by a deep valley, there are the vestiges of Danish encampments. And there is perhaps scarcely an eminence in Scotland on which in the early ages an invading army could have encamped with more advantage than on this hill, or a moor upon which the invaders could have been met with on more equal terms than on the moor adjacent. The eminence is detached on the one side from the other rising grounds of the country by a valley, the bottom of which is occupied by a bog, and it commands on the other an extensive bay, in which whole fleets may ride with safety; while the neighbouring moor is of great extent, and has few inequalities of surface. Towards its eastern boundary, and about six miles from the town of Cromarty, there is a huge heap of stones, which from time immemorial has been known to the people of the place as *The Grey Cairn*, a name equally descriptive of other lesser

cairns in its vicinity, but which with the aid of the definite article serves to distinguish it. Not much more than thirty years ago the stones of a similar cairn of this moor were carried away for building by a farmer of the parish. There were found on their removal human bones of a gigantic size, among the rest a scull sufficiently capacious, according to the description of a labourer employed by the farmer, to contain "two lippies of bear."

About fifteen years ago a Cromarty fisherman was returning from Inverness by a road which for several miles skirts the upper edge of the moor, and passes within a few yards of the cairn. Night overtook him ere he had half completed his journey; but after an interval of darkness, the moon, nearly at full, rose over the eminence on his right, and restored to him the face of the country,—the hills which he had passed before evening, but which, faint and distant, were sinking as he advanced, the wood which, bordering his road on the one hand, almost reached him with its shadow, and the bleak, unvaried, interminable waste which, stretching away on the other, seemed lost in the horizon. After he had entered on the moor, the stillness which, at an earlier stage of his journey, had occasionally been broken by the distant lowing of cattle, or the bark of a shepherd's dog, was interrupted by only his own footsteps, which, from the nature of the soil, sounded hollow as if he trod over a range of vaults, and by the low, monotonous murmur of the neighbouring wood. As he approached the cairn, however, a noise of a different kind began to mingle with the other two; it was one with which his pro-

fession had made him well acquainted,—that of waves breaking against a rock. The nearest shore was fully three miles distant, the nearest cliff more than five, and yet he could hear wave after wave striking as if against a precipice, then dashing upwards, and anon descending, as distinctly as ever he had done when passing in his boat beneath the promontories of Cromarty. On coming up to the cairn, his astonishment was converted into terror.—Instead of the brown heath, with here and there a fir seedling springing out of it, he saw a wide tempestuous sea stretching before him, with the large pile of stones frowning over it, like one of the Hebrides during the gales of the Equinox. The pile appeared half enveloped in cloud and spray, and two large vessels, with all their sheets spread to the wind, were sailing round it.

The writer of these chapters had the good fortune to witness at this cairn a scene which, without owing any thing to the supernatural, almost equalled the one described. He was, like the fisherman, returning from Inverness to Cromarty in a clear frosty night of December. There was no moon, but the whole sky towards the north was glowing with the Aurora Borealis, which, shooting from the horizon to the central heavens, in flames tinged with all the hues of the rainbow, threw so strong a light, that he could have counted every tree of the wood, and every tumulus of the moor. There is a long hollow morass which runs parallel to the road for nearly a mile ;—it was covered this evening by a dense fleece of vapour raised by the frost, and which, without ascending, was rolling over the moor before a light breeze. It had reached

the cairn, and the detached clump of seedlings which springs up at its base.—The seedlings rising out of the vapour appeared like a fleet of ships, with their sails drooping against their masts, on a sea where there were neither tides nor winds;—the cairn, grey with the moss and lichens of forgotten ages, towered over it like an island of that sea.

But I daresay I have imparted to the reader more of the fabulous history of Cromarty than he will well know how to be grateful for. One other remark in better language, and a more vigorous style of thinking than my own, and I shall have done;—it may shew that Sir Thomas, however unique as a man, forms as a historian, only one of a class.

“The last century,” says the philosophic Gibbon, “abounded with antiquarians of profound learning and easy faith, who, by the dim light of legends, and traditions, of conjectures, and etymologies, conducted the great grandchildren of Noah from the tower of Babel to the extremities of the globe. Of these judicious critics,” continues the historian, “one of the most entertaining was Olaus Rudbeck, professor in the university of Upsal. Whatever is celebrated either in history or fable this zealous patriot ascribes to his country. From Sweden, the Greeks themselves derived their alphabetical characters, their astronomy, and their religion. Of that delightful region, (for so it appeared to the eyes of a native,) the Atlantis of Plato, the country of the Hyperboreans, the garden of the Hesperides, the Fortunate Islands, and even the Elysian fields were all but faint and imperfect transcripts. A clime so profusely favoured by nature could not long remain

desert after the flood. The learned Rudbeck allows the family of Noah a few years to multiply from eight to about twenty thousand persons. He then disperses them into small colonies to replenish the earth and to propagate the human species. The Swedish detachment (which marched, if I am not mistaken, under the command of Askenos, the son of Gomer, the son of Japhet,) distinguished itself by a more than common diligence in the prosecution of this great work. The northern hive cast its swarms over the greater part of Europe, Africa, and Asia ; and (to use the author's metaphor,) the blood circulated from the extremities to the heart."

CHAPTER IV.

Drowned wast thou, till an earthquake made thee steep.

KEATS.

THE bay of Cromarty is one of the finest in the world. It holds a place in the old chronicles of the kingdom, with the marvellous fire stones of Argyleshire, which consumed straw and stubble, and those wonderful birds of the Decaledonian Sea, which sprung, like mushrooms, out of decayed logs of wood. Unlike, however, either the stones or the birds, it enjoys a reputation which does not become worse as it grows old. The stones have been huddled into the same class with the stone of the alchymist, and the birds into that of the phœnix of eastern mythology, but the bay of Cromarty is still as famous as ever. It has been described by Buchanan in very elegant Latin as “formed by the waters of the German Ocean, opening a way through the stupendous cliffs of the most lofty precipices, and expanding within into a spacious basin, affording certain refuge against every tempest.” The old poet could not have described it better had he sat on the loftiest pinnacle of these cliffs, during a winter storm from the north east, and seen vessel after vessel pressing towards the opening through spray and tempest ;—like the inhabitants of an invaded country hurrying to the gateway of some impregnable

fortress,—their speed quickened by the wild shouts of the enemy, and pursued by the smoke of burning villages.

Viewed from the Moray Frith in a clear morning of summer, the entrance of the bay presents one of the most pleasing scenes I have ever seen. The foreground is occupied by a gigantic wall of brown precipices, beetling for many miles over the edge of the Frith, and crested by dark thickets of furze and pine. A multitude of shapeless crags lie scattered along the base, and we hear the noise of the waves breaking against them, and see the reflected gleam of the foam flashing at intervals into the darker recesses of the rock. The waters of the bay find entrance, as described by the historian, through a natural postern scooped out of the middle of this immense wall. The huge projections of cliff on either hand, with their alternate masses of light and shadow, remind us of the outjets and buttresses of an ancient fortress; and the two Sutors towering over the opening, of turrets built to command a gateway. The scenery within is of a softer and more gentle character. We see hanging woods, sloping promontories, a little quiet town, and an undulating line of blue mountains, swelling as they retire into a bolder outline, and a loftier altitude, until they terminate in the snow-streaked, cloud-capped Ben-Wevis. When I last gazed on this scene, and contrasted the wild sublimity of the foreground, with the calm beauty of the interior, I was led to compare it, I scarcely knew how, to the exquisite masterpiece of the Saxon sculptor Nahl. The piece is placed over the grave of a lady who died in

the full bloom of youth and loveliness, and represents the ruins of a tomb shattered as if by the last trumpet. But the chisel has not been employed on it in merely imitating the uncouth ravages of accident and decay ; for through the yawning rifts and fissures there is seen a beautiful female, as if starting into life, and rising in all the ecstacy of unmingled happiness to enjoy the beatitudes of Heaven.

Shifting the scene from the opening of the frith to the summit of the southern Sutor, we are presented with another aspect of beauty. We stand on the edge of a gentle declivity, embossed with heath, and fern, and hillocks of moss ;—a dark fir wood rises thick behind us, and a double line of fields, with their green hedge-rows, and clumps of forest trees, occupies the undulating sweep of the descent below. A tall thick wall of foliage towers over the lower edge, where the bank sinks abruptly to the shore, and the frith in all its extent, with its receding bays and jutting headlands, stretches beyond. We can trace its various currents by their darker ripple, and their edges of foam,—they remind us of rivers winding through a meadow ; the sun looking down on the green recesses of the water, unveils to us all its profounder depths, and all its lighter shallows ; we see far amid the hills the glitter of sails—we can hear even the slow measured dash of the oar, and directly behind the town, which occupies a little alluvial promontory, there is a fleet riding at anchor. Man is busy with all the “ various labour which he taketh under the sun ;” there is a low ceaseless hum, the blended murmur of his thousand avocations, which, even at this eleva-

tion, seems to stir, and hardly stir, the deep stillness of the air ; but his toils, and his cares are restricted to the sea and the lower grounds, and silence and solitude brood over the brown ascending moors and blue shaggy recesses of the hilly region beyond. May we not almost imagine that the scene we contemplate presents us with a complete epitome of the entire surface of the globe ;—there are woods and waters, mountains and vallies, snows that defy the heats of summer,—and the sunny waving of ripening fields. Yonder are the hills with their purple carpeting of heath, and their deep fringes of wood,—solitary, and uninhabited, save in one little ravine where the smoke of the shepherd's fire is curling slowly around the cliffs, and then mingling with the sky. Century after century has passed away, and yet still nature lingers in these wilds, as in the immense forests of the west, in a late and protracted infancy. And now descending to the lower tract, we see fields, and lawns, and towers, and cottages,—promontories tipped with villages, bridges striding across the streams, granaries rising on the shores, and harbours abutting into the sea. We are reminded of a country in its vigorous manhood ; but turning to where the northern Sutor descends towards the west, the eye meets with only a dreary waste of sand, which the sea winds have heaped in the lapse of ages over the original soil. We think of the wide extended deserts of Africa and the East ; and when from some of the larger hollows we look round us and see only hills of barren sand, with here and there a dingy, rocky-looking flat, which was once vegetable soil, but which can no longer support

vegetable life, we almost fancy that, having anticipated the flight of time by many centuries, we have arrived at the old age of creation, and witness the earth in its dotage.

Let us survey the landscape a second time ;—not merely in its pictorial aspect, nor as connected with the commoner associations which link it to its present inhabitants, but as *antiquaries of the world*,—as students of those wonderful monuments of nature, on which she has traced her hieroglyphical inscriptions of plants and animals that impart to us the history, not of a former age, but of a former creation. Geology is the most poetical of all sciences ; and its various facts, as they present themselves to the human mind, possess a more overpowering immensity than even those of Astronomy itself. For while the Astronomer can carry about with him in his imagination, a little portable Orrery of the whole solar system, the Geologist is oppressed by a weight of rocks and mountains, and of strata piled over strata which all his diligence in forming theories, has not yet enabled him completely to arrange. He is no mere intellectual mechanician, who calculates and reasons on the movements of a piece of natural clockwork ; the objects with which he is chiefly conversant, have no ascertained forms, or known proportions, that he may conceive of them as abstract figures, or substitute a set of models in their places ; his province, in at least all its outer skirts, is still a *terra incognita*, which he cannot conceive of as a whole ; and the walks which intersect it are so involved and irregular that, like those of an artificial wilderness, they seem to double its extent. The opera-

tions of his latest eras, as his science exists in time, terminate long before history begins ; while, as it exists in space, he has to grapple with the immense globe itself, with all its oceans, and all its continents. Goethe finely remarks, that the ideas and feelings of the schoolboy who tells his fellows that the world is round, are widely different in depth and sublimity from those experienced by the wanderer of Ithaca, when he spoke of the unlimited earth, and the unmeasurable and infinite sea.

There is a happy combination in the scene before us of the more pleasing features of a lowland and of an alpine country ; yonder is the gigantic Ben-Wevis with all his attendant hills, and yonder a widely extended champaign with its comparatively level fields, and its long flat tracts of woodland and moor. That mountainous ridge towards the north forms part of the Highlands ; immediately beneath it is the low country ; and not more exactly may we trace the boundaries of these several districts from their very opposite aspects of scenery, than from their geological character. Wherever the scene presents a bold high outline, we find only primary rock, wherever it sinks below a certain level, and exhibits a softer and less diversified contour we find only secondary. And the two districts belong to very different eras ; for when the higher with its granites and its micaceous schists, must have existed as a chain of islands, the widely spread archipelago of some former world, the lower, with all its shales, its clays, and its sandstones, was shrouded in the prolific womb of the sea.

I remember one day early in winter, about six

years ago, that a dense bank of mist came rolling in between the Sutors, like a huge wave, and enveloped the entire frith, and the lower lands by which it is skirted, in one extended mantle of moisture and gloom. I ascended the hill ; on its sides the trees were dank and dripping ; and the cloud which as I advanced seemed to open only a few yards before me, came closing a few yards behind ; but on the summit all was clear ; and so different was the state of the atmosphere in this upper region from that which obtained in the fog below, that a keen frost was binding up the pools, and glazing the sward. The billows of mist seemed breaking against the sides of the eminence ; the sun, as it hung cold and distant in the south, was throwing its beams athwart the surface of this upper ocean,—lighting the slow roll of its waves as they rose and fell to the breeze, and casting its tinge of red on the snowy summits of the far hills, which presented, now as of old, the appearance of a group of islands. Ben Wevis and its satellites rose abruptly to the west ;—a broad strait separated it from two lesser islands, which, like leviathans, raising, and but barely raising themselves above the surface, heaved their flat backs a little over the line ; the peaks of Ben-Vaichaird, diminished by distance, were seen occupying the south ; and far to the north I could descry some of the loftier hills of Sutherland, and the Ord-hill of Caithness. I have since often thought of this singular scene in connection with some of the bolder theories of the geologist. I have conceived of it as an apparition, in these latter days, of the scenery of a darkly remote period ; a period when these cold and barren summits were covered with

the luxuriant vegetation of a tropical climate ;—with flowering shrubs, and palms, and huge ferns ; and when every little bay on their shores was enlivened by fleets of *nautili* spreading their tiny sails to the wind, and presenting their colours of pearl and azure to the sun.

But, from the pinnacles of the building restored in this way, to at least a pictorial entireness, we must descend to its ruins, and see whether, from its broken sculptures, and its half defaced inscriptions, we cannot trace some faint, imperfect outline of its history. And first, in a little bay to the east of the town, we find beds of a greyish stratified claystone which have been laid bare by the sea. They lie in an angle of about twenty with the horizon ; and we find that they are thickly interspersed with flattened nodules of an elliptical or circular form. On breaking these across, we ascertain that they are composed of either an imperfect limestone, or an indurated clay, and see that, in the centre of each, there is a broken line of deep black, in the direction of which they separate more easily than in any other. We commence splitting them up. Here, in the heart of this solid mass, are the remains of a fish, scaled like the coal-fish or haddock, which seem to have been subjected to such immense pressure that the form can no longer be traced ; but, here are the bones of the head, and there the fins ; and the scales appear scarcely less entire than when they covered the living animal. In this second nodule we meet with the broken exuviae of a fish of a different species, which, instead of being scaled like the other, seems roughened in the same way as the dog-fish, or the shark. Here is a confused, bituminous looking

mass that has much the appearance of a toad, or frog ; here there are a number of shining plates like those of the tortoise ; and here an assemblage of what seem to have been bones,—see, there is the jaw bone of some unknown animal, thickly set with sharp hooked teeth, and there a large oval plate, like an ancient buckler, which seems to have formed part of the skull. —To what era of the world's history can we refer these truly interesting remains, buried as they are, except where disinterred by the waves, under vast rocks of sandstone, and huge masses of clay ?

For several yards farther to the east the beach is so covered by shingle and stones that we see no more of the strata till we reach a low promontory almost immediately under the southern Sutor, where we find a thick bed of red sandstone, and then a thin layer of stratified clay. We pass over the edges of succeeding layers. First over alternate strata of red and yellowish sandstone, with here and there an aluminous vein containing nodules of a calcareous stone prettily variegated with brown and yellow ; then there occurs a slender strip of limestone ; then a thick bed of breccia composed of waterworn pebbles held together by a coarse gritty cement ; and then we arrive at the hard granitic rock of the hill. From where the latter bounds on the breccia to the bed of sandstone nearest the town, there is rather more than a hundred and forty yards, and from the almost vertical position of the strata, for they incline in an angle of about eighty, we have merely to pass along their edges to gain an acquaintance with them, which could only be acquired were they still reposing on the planes of their original depo-

sition, by sinking a shaft more than a hundred yards in depth. We may conceive of the advantage which this circumstance presents to us from the ease which we find in running the eye over books arranged on the shelves of a library, contrasted with the trouble which they give us in taking them up one after one when they are packed in a deep chest. As we advance onwards athwart the granitic rock of the hill, the precipices gradually become higher and more abrupt. And so distorted and broken are the almost vertical strata, that they remind us, from their splintery state, of sheets of glass which, when half molten, had been plunged into water; and from their curves and involutions, of the uncouth intricacies of Runic sculpture. Still, as we proceed, the crags become more shattered, the curves more frequent, the precipices more lofty; we see the foot prints of earthquake and conflagration still more and more distinctly impressed, until, reaching the south eastern extremity of the hill, we find it bordered by large masses of hornblende, a mineral supposed, by at least the older geologists, to connect primary rocks with those of volcanic origin. The Moray-Frith stretches beyond.

Turning the extreme point of the hill, we pass beneath the precipices towards the west. Observe as we advance that there occur among the rounded pebbles of the shore, masses of a greyish coloured basalt, nodules of limestone, much hollowed by little testaceous animals that, like the conies of scripture, make their houses in the rocks, and flakes of a black bituminous shale which bear the impressions of shells, and what were once scales of fish. But from whence

come they? Not, it is obvious, from the wall of granitic precipices that frowns over us, nor from the cliffs of hornblende that line the shore below, nor yet from the hard quartzose skerries that raise their forests of algæ to the surface of the shallows. They belong to to a very different formation, and have been propelled in the lapse of years, and by the waves of a thousand tempests, from the profounder depths of the frith beyond. Observe towards the north east, immediately under the northern Sutor, two little rocks which, jutting out of the sea, seem to rise and fall with the heave of the tide, and which, at this distance of about five miles, might be so readily mistaken for two fishing boats rowing along the shore. Observe too in an opposite direction, and at nearly an equal distance, a similar, but rather larger group of boat-like skerries that seem anchored in the bay of Eathie. These outlying rocks form part of a vast ridge of what Geologists term the Lias formation, composed of ledges of limestone alternating with beds of bituminous shale, and broken by irregular veins of basalt. It runs for about ten miles in a line nearly parallel to that of the coast, from whence it inclines in an angle of about thirty; but except in the bay of Shandwick, and immediately under the hill of Eathie, where it appears at low ebb, and in these ledges which raise themselves to the surface about half a mile from the shore, it lies hidden beneath the waters of the frith.—Let us explore its various phenomena where it rests against the cliffs of the hill.

After crossing the upper line of beach with its huge boulders of gneiss, and its banks of rounded pebbles,

we arrive at a large bed of dark coloured bituminous slate, which when thrown into the fire burns with a violent flame without suffering any marked diminution of bulk, and emits a strong sulphurous odour. A ledge of limestone separates it from a lower bed of the same inflammable mineral, which is in turn separated from a bed that lies still lower, by a similar ledge; and though the sea debars a more extensive survey, we can see a third ledge roughened with dulce and tangle standing out of the shallows beyond. Let us examine more minutely: we find that the bituminous beds, like the stratified clays of the little bay, are interspersed with nodules of limestone, rich with the spoils of both the animal and vegetable worlds; but these occur in much greater abundance, and are more equally spread throughout the entire mass. Every nodule, even the smallest, every layer of the shale, every splinter which we detach from the ledges, abound with organic remains, so heaped together, and yet so equally diffused throughout, that it would seem as if one half the matter of the immense deposition on which we tread existed at one time either as plants or testacea. We stand in the midst of a charnel house of the old world,—a charnel house, not merely of perished individuals, but of extinct tribes. Here are the broken and involved spirals of a whole catacomb of ammonites, and here the tapering and pointed cylinder of an embalmed belamite. Myriads of microscopic shells lie embedded in the stony recesses of this block of lime; and so charged is yonder ledge with animal matter, that it still yields, when struck by the hammer, the heavy, fetid odour of corruption and decay. Yonder

mass seems almost entirely composed of little striated bivalves ; and we may mark just beside it the remains of a whole community of shells of a ruder form and larger size, that still retain the curved irregularities of the outer surface, and the prismatic colours of the pearl within. See here is the large fleshy leaf of some plant resembling the aloe ;—here is a piece of fossil wood with its forked branches, and its accidental globosities,—its seed vessels charged with lime, and its thick glossy bark passing into coal ;—and here,—here is actually a piece of charcoal ;—has it glowed in the household fire of some pre-adamite hind or shepherd ? Nay, observe that there run athwart the beds, in every possible direction, veins of a vitreous basalt, which must have been forced upwards in some darkly remote period from the molten depths below ; observe too, that the very limestone seems to have changed its nature under the influence of the extreme heat, presenting, wherever it leans against the basalt, the appearance of white marble. What need of introducing the domestic fire, with its puny agency, when we can command the fires and lavas of the volcano !

But let us quit this wonderful city of the dead, with all its reclining obelisks, and all its sculptured tumuli, the memorials of a race that exist only in their tombs. And yet, ere we go, it were well, perhaps, to indulge in some of those serious thoughts which we so naturally associate with the solitary burying ground, and the mutilated remains of the departed. Let us once more look round us and say whether, of all men, the Geologist does not stand most in need of the Bible, how-

ever much he may condemn it in the pride of speculation. We tread on the remains of organized and sentient creatures which, though more numerous at one period than the whole family of man, have long since ceased to exist; the individuals perished one after one, their remains served only to elevate the floor on which their descendants pursued the various instincts of their nature, and then sunk, like the others, to form a still higher layer of soil; and now that the whole race has passed from the earth, and we see the animals of a different tribe occupying their places; what survives of them but a mass of inert and senseless matter, never again to be animated by the mysterious spirit of vitality,—that spirit which dissipated in the air, or diffused in the ocean, can, like the sweet sounds and pleasant odours of the past, be neither gathered up nor recalled. And O! how dark the analogy which would lead us to anticipate a similar fate for ourselves! As individuals, we are but of yesterday; to-morrow we shall be laid in our graves, and the tread of the coming generation shall be over our heads. Nay, have we not seen a terrible disease sweep away, in a few years, more than eighty millions of the race to which we belong; and can we think of this and say, that a time may not come when, like the fossils of these beds, our whole species shall be mingled with the soil; and when, though the sun may look down in his strength on our pleasant dwellings and our green fields, there shall be silence in all our borders, and desolation in all our gates, and we shall have no thought of that past which it is now our delight to recall, and no portion in that

future which it is now our very nature to anticipate. Surely it is well to believe that a widely different destiny awaits us ; that the God who endowed us with those wonderful powers, which enable us to live in every departed era, every coming period, has given us to possess these powers for ever ; that not only does he number the hairs of our heads, but that his cares are extended to even our very remains ; that our very bones, instead of being left, like the exuviæ around us, to form the rocks and clays of a future world, shall, like those in the valley of vision, be again clothed with muscle and sinew, and that our bodies, animated by the warmth and vigour of life, shall again connect our souls to the matter existing around us, and be obedient to every impulse of the will. It is surely no time, when we walk amid the dark cemeteries of a departed world, and see the cold blank shadows of the tombs falling drearily athwart the way, —it is surely no time to extinguish the light given us to shine so fully and so cheerfully on our own proper path, merely because its beams do not enlighten the recesses that yawn around us. And oh ! what more unworthy of reasonable men than to reject so consoling a revelation on no juster quarrel, than that when it unveils to us much of what could not otherwise be known, and without the knowledge of which we could not be other than unhappy, it leaves to the invigorating exercises of our own powers, whatever, in the wide circle of creation, lies fully within their grasp.

And now let us ascend once more to the top of the eminence ;—one other short excursion and we shall have gathered the materials of the earlier portion of

our history. The secondary basin of this part of the country extends in one direction from the Ordhill of Caithness to the eastern extremity of Loch Ness, and in another from near Elgin to the little Highland village of Contin. Observe how the distant mountains of Sutherland and Ross, on the one hand, and of Inverness and Moray, on the other, rise around it as its proper shores ;—here advancing in huge promontories, there receding into spacious bays. Observe, too, that its continuity is broken by three immense cavities,—the friths of Moray, Cromarty, and Dornoch ; and that there runs through it, in directly the line of the great Caledonian valley, a chain of hills of a widely different character from the shales and sandstones out of which they arise, and which at their bases seem so disturbed and broken. The two Sutors of Cromarty form the last links in the chain towards the north ; the hill of Eathie juts up beyond ; directly over it is the heathy ridge which terminates at Rosemarkie ; the eminence at Fortrose, and the precipices of the Cragwood rise still farther to the south ; we see next in the series the miniature Sutors of Munloch, and the wooded pyramid at Kessock ; and the line terminates with the blue dun of Craig Phadric, and the loftier hill behind, which connects it in this direction to the mountains of the valley. Mark the granitic texture of these hills, especially such of them as rise towards the north ; observe carefully the strange contortions of their almost vertical strata ; the veins of pure granite which in some places intersect them ; the huge masses of hornblende which lie scattered on their shores ; the extreme steepness of the angle in which the softer

stone of the basin leans on either side against their lower declivities ; the continuity of the ridge of lias which runs in a line so parallel to their bases,—with its charcoal, its basalts, and its altered limestones ;—and then say whether the appearances exhibited by the face of any country can testify with more overpowering evidence of the agency of the volcano and the earthquake. Observe, too, that this interesting chain constitutes a mere elongation of the still loftier ridge which forms the northern wall of the great valley ; take into account the immense depth of the lakes and friths which occupy almost the entire length of the latter, and in how rectilinear a direction it runs across the island ; connect these appearances with the facts, that the waves of Loch Ness undulated in strange sympathy with the reeling towers and crashing walls of Lisbon during the great earthquake of 1755, and that in the earthquake of 1816 the tremor was more violent in the tract of country by which the valley is bounded, than in any other,—apparently on the same principle which, when we press a cracked pipkin between our hands, renders the motion greatest in the line of the crack ;—weigh the amount of evidence thus presented, and then say whether we may not infer that the long hollow line of the valley, from where we lose it in the depths of the German Ocean, to where it disappears amid the waves of the Atlantic, is but the upper part of an immense fissure in the crust of the earth, the effect of some terrible convulsion, and that the chain of hills which we now see stretching before us in dim perspective, forms part of the materials

which were heaved up at its formation from out its dark and hidden profundities.

And now that we have completed our circuit, and collected our data, let us again recall the landscape of the earliest period of our history. All the lower lands disappear, the hills of the central chain descend, the higher mountains exist as a group of islands, fertile in the plants and trees, and peopled by the animals of an earlier creation ; and at the bottom of the sea which environs their bases the strata of the secondary deposition are forming in slow and regular succession. In this remote period the fish of the little bay darkened their various banks and shallows, intent on the preservation of the species, or explored their forests of tangle in pursuit of their prey ; the ammonite raised its sails to the wind as it passed from sea to sea ; the tortoise enjoyed its life of a century under trees whose buds burst into life at the approach of summer, and shrunk in the chills of autumn ; the pine matured its cones on the heights above, and the oyster ripened its pearl in the ooze below. Nature had established her fixed laws, and found prompt obedience throughout all her provinces, even the most remote. She had then, as now, divided her empire between the contending principles of production and decay ; generation succeeded generation ; the living inhabited the place of the dead ; there was the imperfection of infancy, the full maturity of middle life, the decline of old age ; vapours arose ; rains descended ; winds darkened the sea ; waves whitened the shore ; the pebbles of the stream became water-worn and smooth ; the decaying tree fell athwart the swollen current, and

was borne out to the ocean ; the spoils of every preceding tempest were covered by the wreck of the tempests which succeeded ; the broken fragments of every earlier generation were buried beneath the remains of the generation which flourished after ; and thus, under the operations of the commoner laws, hills became less lofty, and the depths of the sea less profound, until the agency of a new succession of causes produced a new series of effects.

Let us first remark that the various depositions which now form the secondary strata of the basin, and which we find every where so displaced and broken, must originally have occupied extensive and continuous planes ; and though somewhat modified in form by the chance irregularities of the floor on which they rested their position must of necessity have been nearly horizontal. The alternate layers of sandstone and clay had settled at a remoter period,—the lias at a more recent ; and over all were spread the waters of the sea, like those of a lake in early spring when they rise above its plane of yet unbroken ice. And, like the ice too, this lower firmament separated the waters above from the waters below. But the element which composed the under fluid differed widely from that of the upper ;—it was a sterner, a fiercer, a more resistless. The sea may rise at the call of the winds and engulf a navy, but what, save the fire which rages in the internal recesses of the earth, can awaken the earthquake and the volcano, and swallow up whole cities, with the hills which had towered over them ? In some remote epoch a terrible convulsion, or rather series of convulsions took place. The

ice of the secondary deposition, like that of the Baltic during the gales of April, was suddenly broken up. The under strata, which had been entombed for ages, were forced through the upper in huge half molten masses, that heaved their broken ridges into the air. The two Sutors, the hill of Eathic, the various eminences of the chain, till where it merges in the wall of the great valley, seem to have mounted from the abyss at this period, like those chiefs which rise from among the people when some overwhelming revolution has broken up the older formations of society ; and at their feet we find what were the superior strata trampled and broken into every complexity of disarrangement ;—in some places thrown off in a nearly vertical angle, in others striding over the back of some hidden mass, which, when ascending to the surface, was arrested by the way,—here sinking abruptly into the sea, there frowning in a sudden precipice over the shore, yonder thrusting up their sharp ledges through the soil. Even the central cluster of islands, now a group of lofty mountains, shared in the convulsion ;—they were heaved upwards into a higher and colder region, and the sides of the great valley which divides them from sea to sea were torn asunder in the ascent. But what imagination can conceive of all the circumstances of grandeur which must have attended so sublime a revolution ; when the lower rocks, glowing like the moon as she rises amid a sea of vapour, raised their immense heads above the crust that for ages had accumulated over them ; and the granitic band that had interposed its huge barrier between the eastern and western oceans was snapped asunder like the

magic girdle of Florimel, or the withs of Delilah. We fail in recalling, amid the brightness and tranquillity of a scene so lovely as that which now lies spread before us, the heave of earthquakes, the bursting of flames, the roar of waves, the rush of cataracts, lands rising, seas receding, the yawning of valleys, the upheaving of hills, and thickening over the whole, the canopy of a mingled darkness of smoke, ashes, and vapour.

CHAPTER V.

The wild sea, haited by the fierce north east,
 So roar'd, so madly raged, so proudly swell'd,
 As it would thunder full into our streets.

ARMSTRONG.

THERE rises directly over the town of Cromarty, to the height of nearly a hundred feet, a green sloping bank, in some places covered with wood, in others laid out into gardens and fields. We may trace it at a glance all along the shores of the frith, from where it merges into the southern Sutor, till where it sinks, at the upper extremity of the bay of Udoll; and, fronting it on the opposite side, we may see a similar encarpment, winding along the various curves and indentations of the coast,—now retiring far into the country along the edge of the bay of Nigg,—now abutting into the frith, near the village of Invergordon. The friths of Moray and Dornoch are commanded by resembling ramparts of bank of a nearly corresponding elevation, and a thorough identity of character; and, as in the frith of Cromarty, the space between their bases and the shore is occupied by a strip of level country, which in some places encroaches on the sea in the form of long low promontories, and is hollowed out in others to nearly the base of the encarpment. Whenever we examine, we find data to conclude, that in some remote era,—remote, though but of yes-

terday compared with the unmeasured periods of the preceding chapter, this continuous bank formed the line of coast, and that the plain at its base was every where covered by the waters of the sea. We see headlands, rounded as if by the waves, advancing, the one beyond the other, into the waving fields, and richly-swarded meadows of this lower terrace, and receding bays with their grassy unbeaten shores comparatively abrupt at the entrance, and reclining in a flatter angle within. We may find too, every where under the vegetable soil of the terrace, alternate layers of sand and water-worn pebbles, and occasionally, though of rarer occurrence, beds of shells of the existing species, and the bones of fish. In the valley of Munlochy the remains of oyster beds, which could not have been formed in less than two fathoms of water, have been discovered a full half mile from the sea; beds of cockles still more extensive, and the bones of a porpoise have been dug up among the fields which border on the bay of Nigg; similar appearances occur in the vicinity of Tain; and in digging a well, about thirty years ago, in the western part of the town of Cromarty, there was found in the gravel a large fir tree, which, from the rounded appearance of the trunk and branches, seemed to have been at one time exposed to the action of the waves. In a burying ground of the town, which lies embosomed in an angle of the bank, the sexton sometimes finds the dilapidated spoils of our commoner shellfish mingling with the ruins of a nobler animal; and in another inflection of the bank, which lies a short half mile to the east of the town, there is a vast accumulation of drift peat, many feet

in thickness, and the remains of huge trees. Let us examine the contents of the latter inflection.—Our history, like that of our species, has its obscure middle period of which no records exist ; and it is interesting to remark how, in striding across the chasm, we leave on the further edge the extinct animals of a former creation, to find on the nearer, those which still inhabit our seas ; and quit at once the palms and gigantic testacea of the tropics, for the mosses and lichens of a cold and weeping climate.

Let us first remark that nearly opposite to the inflection of the bank, but fully three hundred yards lower down, there is a similar inflection of the shore, which serves as a kind of natural wear in detaining wrack and tangle, and in which we sometimes find, after storms from the north-east, accumulations of sea weed many yards in extent, and several feet in depth. Let us observe too that the inflection of the bank must have formed just such a similar wear, and that the green swampy slope, covered with trees, which we see rising in its centre, occupies relatively the same place which the weed does in the angle of the shore. Somewhat more than thirty years ago this slope was laid open by a water spout to the depth of twelve feet, when it was discovered to be composed mostly of vegetable remains,—part of the ruins, perhaps, of one of those forests, which covered, at one time, almost the entire surface of the island, and sheltered the naked inhabitants from the legions of Agricola. Huge trees from two to four feet in diameter, and so entirely decayed that they offered scarcely more resistance to the tool than banks of common clay, were seen to

stretch across the bottom of the newly formed chasm, or to protrude from its sides ; the soil in which they were embedded was a black solid peat-moss, (composed mostly of bark and branches) alternating at various depths with layers of sand and gravel ; and in masses of a fetid unctuous earth, which seemed endowed with a stronger preservative quality than even the moss itself, there were found the leaves of plants, so little decayed that the species could still be distinguished, stalks of what seemed to have been either grass or straw, and whole handfulls of hazel nuts. I have even found in this unctuous substance the fragments of some of our less fragile insects,—those sheathes which cover the wings of the green beetle, and the remains of a little fly of a deep jet colour, but burnished like the darker feathers of the magpie, with a shade of crimson and green. It is not yet four years since there were dug out of it, about nine feet from the surface, three huge oaken planks, which had evidently been fashioned by the hand of man ; and in the bottom of the chasm, which is now fast filling up, there were found, about fourteen years before, fragments of the bones and horns of deer, and the horn of an elk. I have not unfrequently amused myself in this place of bogs and quagmires by associating its contents with the landscapes of a wide forest, inhabited by wild animals which are now only to be found in the wastes of Norway and the Ukraine, or by men nearly as wild, who, with implements like those of the South Sea islands, are making their first rude essays in the arts. Sometimes too, to vary the scene, I can connect the ruins before me with the devasta-

tions of some signal inundation, which, after destroying forests and the dwellings of men, and surprising the roe and the elk in their lairs, covered our friths and bays with the spoils of the ravaged country.

The era of the upper coast line we find it impossible to fix ; but there are grounds enough from which to conclude that it must have been remote,—so remote, perhaps, as to lie beyond the beginnings of our more authentic histories. We see, in the vicinity of Tain, one of the oldest ruins of the province situated far below the base of the enscarpment ; and meet in the neighbourhood of Kessock, at a still lower level, with old Celtic cairns and tumuli. It is a well established fact too, that, for at least the last three hundred years, the sea, instead of receding, has been gradually encroaching on the shores of the bay of Cromarty ; and that the place formerly occupied by the old borough, is now covered every tide by nearly two fathoms of water.—The waters of full flood retired from the old coast line ;—there was a low ebb, and they are now again returning. Is it not supposed by astronomers that the sun of our system, accompanied by the orbs that ceaselessly wheel round it, is itself revolving round some unknown centre, though the history of human observation be spread over too brief a space to enable us to ascertain its progress in the vast circle ? Were the life of man to be measured by centuries instead of seasons, we might witness something of this kind in the phenomena of the tides :—We might see in them as it were cycle enclosing cycle in this way,—the ebb and flow of every twelve hours repeated on

an immensely extended scale in periods of more than a thousand years.

The last vestige of what is still termed *Old Cromarty* disappeared about eighteen years ago, when a row of large stones, which had evidently formed the foundation line of a fence, was carried away by some workmen employed in erecting a bulwark. But the few traditions connected with it are not yet entirely effaced. A fisherman of the last century is said to have found among the title deeds of his cottage, a very old piece of parchment, with a profusion of tufts of wool bristling on one of its sides, and bearing in rude antique characters on the other a detail of the measurement and boundaries of a garden which had occupied the identical spot on which he usually anchored his skiff. I am old enough to have conversed with men who remembered to have seen a piece of corn land, and a belt of planting below two properties in the eastern part of the town, that are now bounded by the sea. I reckon among my acquaintance an elderly person, who when sailing along the shore about half a century ago, in the company of a very old man, heard the latter remark, that he was now guiding the helm where, sixty years before, he had guided the plough. Of Elspat Hood, a native of Cromarty, who died in the year 1701, it is said that she attained to the extraordinary age of 120 years, and that in her recollection, which embraced the latter part of the sixteenth century, the *Clach Malacha*, a large stone covered with sea weed, whose base only partially dries during the ebb of Spring and Lammass tides, and which lies a full

quarter of a mile from the shore, was surrounded by corn fields and clumps of wood. And it is a not less curious circumstance than any of these, that about ninety years ago, after a violent night storm from the north-east, the beach below the town was found in the morning strewed over with human bones, which, with several blocks of hewn stone had been washed by the surf out of what had been formerly a burying place. The bones were carried to the churchyard, and buried beneath the eastern gable of the church ; and one of the stones,—the corner stone of a ponderous cornice, is still to be seen on the shore. In the friths of Beaully and Dornoch the sea seems to have encroached to fully as great an extent as in the bay of Cromarty. Below the town of Tain a strip of land, which the militia of the county have frequented for drill and parade, has been swept away within the recollection of some of the older inhabitants; and there may be traced at low water, (says Carey in his notes to Craig Phadrig) on the range of shore that stretches from the ferry of Kessock to nearly Redcastle, the remains of sepulchral cairns, which must have been raised before the places they occupy were invaded by the sea, and which, when laid open, have been found to contain beams of wood, urns, and human bones.— But it is full time that man, the proper inhabitant of the country, should be more thoroughly introduced into this portion of its history. We feel comparatively little interest in the hurricane or the earthquake which ravages only a desert, where there is no intelligent mind to be moved by the majesty of power, or the sublimity of danger ; on the other hand, there is no event, how-

ever trivial in itself, which may not be deemed of importance if it operates on human character and human passion.

It is not much more than twenty years since a series of violent storms from the hostile north-east, which came on at almost regular intervals for five successive winters, seemed to threaten the modern town of Cromarty, with the fate of the ancient. The tides rose higher than tides had ever been known to rise before ; and as the soil exposed to the action of the waves was gradually disappearing, instead of the gentle slope with which the land formerly merged into the beach, its boundaries were marked out by a dark abrupt line resembling a turf wall. Some of the people whose houses bordered on the sea looked exceedingly grave, and affirmed there was no danger whatever ; those who lived higher up thought differently, and pitied their poor neighbours from the bottom of their hearts. The consternation was heightened too by a prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer, handed down for centuries, but little thought of before. It was predicted, it is said, by the old wizard, that Cromarty should be twice destroyed by the sea, and that fish should be caught in abundance on the Castle-hill,—a rounded projection of the enscarpment which rises behind the houses.

Man owes much of his ingenuity to his misfortunes ; and who does not know that, were he less weak and less exposed as an animal, he would be much less powerful as a rational creature. On principles so obvious, these storms had the effect of converting not a few of the townsfolks into builders and architects. In the

eastern suburb of the town, where the land presents a low yet projecting front to the waves, the shore is hemmed in by walls and bulwarks which might be mistaken by a stranger approaching the place by sea, for a chain of little forts. They were erected during the wars of the five winters by the proprietors of the gardens and houses behind ; and the enemy, against whom they had to maintain them, was the sea. At first the contest seemed wellnigh hopeless ;—week after week was spent in throwing up a single bulwark, and an assault of a few hours demolished the whole line. But skill and perseverance prevailed at last ;—the storms are all blown over, but the gardens and houses still remain. Of the many who built and planned during this war, the most indefatigable, the most skilful, the most successful, was Donald Miller.

Donald was a true Scotchman. He was bred a shoemaker ; and painfully did he toil late and early for about twenty-five years with one solitary object in view, which, during all that time, he had never lost sight of,—no, not for a single moment. And what was that one ?—independence,—a competency sufficient to set him above the necessity of further toil ; and this he at length achieved without doing aught, for which the severest censor could accuse him of meanness. The amount of his savings did not exceed four hundred pounds ; but, rightly deeming himself wealthy, for he had not learned to love money for its own sake, he shut up his shop. His father, dying soon after, he succeeded to one of the snugest, though most perilously situated little properties, within the three corners of Cromarty,—the sea bounding it on the one side,

and a stream, small and scanty during the droughts of summer, but sometimes more than sufficiently formidable in winter, sweeping past it on the other. The series of storms came on, and Donald found he had gained nothing by shutting up his shop.

He had built a bulwark in the old, lumbering, Cromarty style of the last century, and confined the wanderings of the stream by two straight walls. Across the walls he had just thrown a wooden bridge, and crowned the bulwark with a parapet, when on came the first of the storms,—a night of sleet and hurricane,—and lo! in the morning, the bulwark lay utterly overthrown, and the bridge, as if it had marched to its assistance, lay beside it, half buried in sea wrack. “Ah,” exclaimed the neighbours, “it would be well for us to be as sure of our summer’s employment as Donald Miller, honest man! Summer came; the bridge strided over the stream as before; the bulwark was built anew, and with such neatness and apparent strength, that no bulwark on the beach could compare with it. Again came winter; and the second bulwark, with its proud parapet, and rock like strength, shared the fate of the first. Donald fairly took to his bed. He rose, however, with renewed vigour, and a third bulwark, more thoroughly finished than even the second, stretched ere the beginning of autumn, between his property and the sea. Throughout the whole of that summer, from grey morning to grey evening, there might be seen on the shore of Cromarty a decent-looking, elderly man, armed with lever and mattock, rolling stones, or raising them from their beds in the sand, or fixing them together in a sloping wall,—toiling as never labourer

toiled, and ever and anon, as a neighbour sauntered the way, straightening his weary back, and tendering the ready snuff-box. That decent-looking, elderly man was Donald Miller. But his toil was all in vain ; again came winter and the storms ; again had he betaken himself to his bed, for his third bulwark had gone the way of the two others. With a resolution truly indomitable, he rose yet again, and erected a fourth bulwark, which has now presented an unbroken front to the storms of twenty years.

Though Donald had never studied mathematics as taught in books or the schools, he was a profound mathematician notwithstanding. Experience had taught him the superiority of the sloping to the perpendicular wall in resisting the waves ; and he set himself to discover that particular angle which, without being inconveniently low, resists them best. Every new bulwark was a new experiment made on principles which he had discovered in the long nights of winter, when hanging over the fire, he converted the hearth-stone into a tablet, and, with a pencil of charcoal, scribbled it over with diagrams. But he could never get the sea to join issue with him by changing in the line of his angles ; for, however deep he sunk his foundations, his insidious enemy contrived to get under them by washing away the beach ; and then the whole wall tumbled into the cavity. Now, however, he had discovered a remedy. First he laid a row of large flat stones on their edges in the line of the foundation, and paved the whole of the beach below until it presented the appearance of a sloping street,—taking care that his pavement, by running in a steeper angle than the shore,

should, at its lower edge, base itself in the sand. Then, from the flat stones which formed the upper boundary of the pavement, he built a ponderous wall which, ascending in the proper angle, rose to the level of the garden, and a neat firm parapet surmounted the whole. — Winter came, and the storms came ; but though the waves broke against the bulwark with as little remorse as against the Sutors, not a stone moved out of its place. Donald had at length fairly triumphed over the sea.

The progress of character is fully as interesting a study as the progress of art ; and both are curiously exemplified in the history of Donald Miller. Now that he had conquered his enemy, and might realize his long cherished dream of unbroken leisure, he found that constant employment had, through the force of habit, become essential to his comfort. His garden was the very paragon of gardens ; and a single glance was sufficient to distinguish his furrow of potatoes from every other furrow in the field ; but, now that his main occupation was gone, much time hung on his hands, notwithstanding his attentions to both. First, he set himself to build a wall quite round his property ; and a very neat one he did build, but unfortunately, when once erected, there was nothing to knock it down again. Then he white-washed his house, and built a new sty for his pig, the walls of which he also white-washed. Then he enclosed two little patches on the side of the stream, to serve as bleaching greens. Then he covered the upper part of his bulwark with a layer of soil, and sowed it with grass. Then he repaired a well, the common property of the town. Then

he constructed a path for foot passengers on the side of a road, which, passing his garden on the south, leads to Cromarty House. His labours for the good of the public were wretchedly recompensed, by, at least, his more immediate neighbours. They would dip their dirty pails into the well he had repaired, and tell him, when he hinted at the propriety of washing them, that they were no dirtier than they used to be. Their pigs would break into his bleaching greens, and furrow up the sward with their snouts; and when he threatened to pound them, he would be told "how unthriving a thing it was to keep the puir brutes aye in the fauld," and how impossible a thing "to watch them ilka time they gae'd out." Herd-boys would gallop their horses, and drive their cattle along the path he had formed for foot passengers exclusively, and when he stormed at the little fellows, they would canter past, and shout out, from what they deemed a safe distance, that their "horses and kye had as good a right to the road as himsel." Worse than all the rest, when he had finished whitening the walls of his pig-sty, and gone in for a few minutes to the house, a mischievous urchin, who had watched his opportunity, sallied across the bridge, and seizing on the brush, white-washed the roof also. Independent of the insult, nothing could be in worse taste; and yet, when the poor man preferred his complaint to the father of the urchin, the boor only deigned to mutter in reply, that "folk would hae nae peace, till three Lammas tides, joined intil ane, would come and roll up the *Clack Malacia*" (it weighs about twenty tons,) "frae its place i' the sea, till flood water mark." It seemed natural to infer, that, a tide potent

enough to roll up the *Clach Malacha*, would demolish the bulwark, and concentrate the energies of Donald for, at least, another season.

But Donald found employment, and the neighbours were left undisturbed to live the life of their fathers without the intervention of the three Lammas tides. Some of the gentlemen farmers of the parish who reared fields of potatoes, which they sold out to the inhabitants in square portions of a hundred yards, besought Donald to superintend the measurement and the sale. The office was one of no emolument whatever, but he accepted it with thankfulness; and though, when he had potatoes of his own to dispose of, he never failed to lower the market for the benefit of the poor, every one now, except the farmers, pronounced him rigid and narrow to a fault. On a dissolution of Parliament, Cromarty became the scene of an election, and the honourable member-apparent deeming it proper, as the thing had become customary, to white-wash the dingier houses of the town, and cover its dirtier lanes with gravel, Donald was requested to direct the improvements. Proudly did he comply; and never before did the same sum of *election*-money whiten so many houses, and gravel so many lanes. Employment flowed in upon him from every quarter. If any of his acquaintance had a house to build, Donald was appointed inspector. If they had to be enfeoffed in their properties Donald acted as bailie, and tendered the earth and stone with the gravity of a judge. He surveyed fields, suggested improvements, and grew old without either feeling or regretting it. Towards the close of his last, and almost only illness, he called for one of

his friends, a carpenter, and gave orders for his coffin ; he named the sempstress who was to be employed in making his shroud ; he prescribed the manner in which his lyke-wake should be kept, and both the order of his funeral, and the streets through which it was to pass. He was particular in his injunctions to the sexton, that the bones of his father and mother should be placed directly above his coffin ;—and professing himself to be alike happy that he had lived, and that he was going to die, he turned him to the wall, and ceased to breathe a few hours after. With all his rage for improvement, he was a good old man of the good old school. Often has he stroked my head, and spoken to me of my father ; and when, at an after period, he had learned that I set a value on whatever was antique and curious, he presented me with the fragment of a large black letter Bible which had once belonged to the Urquharts of Cromarty.

CHAPTER VI.

All hail Macbeth ! thou shalt be king hereafter.

SHAKSPEARE.

It is, perhaps, not quite unworthy of remark, that not only is Cromarty the sole district of the kingdom whose annals ascend into the obscure ages of fable, but that the first passage of even its real history derives its chief interest, not from its importance as a fact, but from what may be termed its chance union with a sublime fiction of poetry. Few, I daresay, have so much as dreamed of connecting either its name or scenery with the genius of Shakspeare, and yet they are linked to one of the most powerful of his achievements as a poet, by the bonds of a natural association. The very first incident of its true history would have constituted, had the details been minutely preserved, the early biography of the celebrated Macbeth ; who, according to our early historians, makes his first appearance in public life as Thane of Cromarty, and Maormor, or great-man of Ross. But I am aware I do not derive from this circumstance any right to become his biographer. For though his character was probably formed at a time when he may be regarded as the legitimate property of the provincial annalist, no sooner is it exhibited in action than he is consigned over to the chroniclers of the kingdom.

For the earlier facts of our history the evidence is rather circumstantial than direct. We see it stamped on the face of the country, or inscribed on our older obelisks, or sometimes disinterred from out of hillocks of sand, or accumulations of moss ; but very rarely do we find it deposited in our archives. Let us examine it however, wherever it presents itself, and strive, should it seem at all intelligible, to determine regarding its purport and amount.—Not more than sixty years ago a bank of blown sand, directly under the northern Sutor, which had been heaped over the soil ages before, was laid open by the winds of a stormy winter, when it was discovered that the nucleus on which it had originally formed, was composed of the bones of various animals of the chase, and the horns of deer. It is not much more than twelve years since there were dug up in the same sandy tract two earthen urns,—the one filled with ashes and fragments of half burned bones, the other with bits of a black bituminous-looking stone, somewhat resembling jet, which had been fashioned into beads, and little flat parallelograms, perforated edgewise with four holes apiece. Nothing could be ruder than the workmanship: The urns were clumsily modelled by the hand, unassisted by a lathe ; the ornaments, rough and unpolished, and still bearing the marks of the tool, resembled nothing of modern production, except, perhaps, the toys which herd boys sometimes amuse their leisure in forming with the knife. We find remains such as these fraught with a more faithful evidence regarding the early state of our country than the black-letter pages of our chroniclers. They testify of a period

when the chase formed, perhaps, the sole employment of the few scattered inhabitants ; and of the practice so prevalent among savages of burying with their dead friends what they most loved when alive. It may be further remarked as a curious fact, and one from which we may infer that trinkets wrought in so uncouth a style could have belonged to only the first stage of society, that man's inventive powers receive their earliest impulse rather from his admiration of the beautiful, than his sense of the useful. He displays a taste in ornament, and has learned to dye his skin, and to tatoo it with rude figures of the sun and moon, before he has become ingenious enough to discover that he stands in need of a covering.

There is a tradition of this part of the country which seems not a great deal more modern than the urns or their ornaments, and which bears the character of the savage nearly as distinctly impressed on it. On the summit of Knock-Ferril, a steep hill which rises a few miles to the west of Dingwall, there are the remains of one of those vitrified forts which so puzzle and interest the antiquary ; and which was originally constructed, says tradition, by a gigantic tribe of *Fions*, for the protection of their wives and children, when they themselves were engaged in hunting. It chanced in one of their excursions that a mean-spirited little fellow of the party, not much more than fifteen feet in height, was so distanced by his more active brethren, that, leaving them to follow out the chase, he returned home, and throwing himself down, much fatigued, on the side of the eminence, fell fast asleep. Garry, for so the unlucky hunter was called, was no favourite

with the women of the tribe ;—he was spiritless and diminutive, and ill tempered ; and as they could make little else of him that they cared for, they converted him into the butt of all their severer jokes, and less agreeable humours. On seeing that he had fallen asleep they stole out to where he lay, and after fastening his long hair with pegs to the grass, awakened him with their shouts and their laughter. He strove to extricate himself, but in vain ; until at length infuriated by their gibes, and the pain of his own exertions, he wrenched up his head, leaving half his locks behind him, and hurrying after them, set fire to the stronghold into which they had rushed for shelter. The flames rose till they mounted over the roof, and broke out at every slit and opening ; but Garry, unmoved by the shrieks and groans of the sufferers within, held fast the door until all was silent ; when he fled into the remote Highlands, towards the west. The males of the tribe, who had, meanwhile, been engaged in hunting on that part of the northern Sutor which bears the name of the hill of Nigg,—alarmed by the vast column of smoke which they saw ascending from their dwelling, came pressing to the frith of Cromarty, and leaping across on their hunting spears, they hurried home. But they arrived to find only a huge pile of embers in which the very stones of the building were sputtering and bubbling with the intense heat like the contents of a boiling caldron. Wild with rage and astonishment, and yet collected enough to conclude that none but Garry could be the author of a deed so barbarous, they tracked him into a nameless Highland glen, which has ever since been known as Glen-

Garry, and there tore him to pieces. And as all the women of the tribe had perished in the flames, there was an end, when this forlorn and widowed generation had passed away, to the whole race of the *Fions*. The next incident of our history bears no other connection to this story, than that it belongs to a very early age, that of the Vikingr and Sea-King, and that we owe our data regarding it not to written records, but to an interesting class of ancient remains, and to a doubtful and imperfect tradition.

In this age, says the tradition, the Maormor of Ross was married to a daughter of the king of Denmark, and proved so barbarous a husband, that her father, to whom she at length found the means of escape, fitted out a fleet and army to avenge on him the cruelties inflicted on her. Three of her brothers accompanied the expedition ; but, on nearing the Scottish coast, a terrible storm arose, in which almost all the vessels of the fleet either foundered or were driven ashore, and the three princes were drowned. The ledge of rock at which this latter disaster is said to have taken place, and which has been described in a former chapter as that part of the Lias ridge which juts out of the bay of Shandwick, still bears the name of the King's-sons ; a magnificent cave which opens among the cliffs of the neighbouring shore is still known as the King's-cave ; and a path that winds to the summits of the precipices beside it, as the King's-path. The bodies of the princes, says the tradition, were interred, one at Shandwick, one at Hilton, and one at Nigg ; and the sculptured obelisks of these places, three very curious pieces of antiquity, are said to be monuments erected to their

memory by their father. In no part of Scotland do stones of this class so abound as on the shores of the Moray Frith. And they have often attracted the notice, and employed the ingenuity of the antiquary ; but it still appears somewhat doubtful whether we are to regard them as of Celtic or of Scandinavian origin. It may be remarked, however, that though their style of sculpture resembles, in its general features, that exhibited in the ancient crosses of Wales, which are unquestionably British, and though they are described in a tradition current on the southern shore of the Moray Frith, as monuments raised by the inhabitants on the expulsion of the Danes, the amount of evidence seems to preponderate in the opposite direction ; when we consider that they are invariably found bordering on the sea ; that their design and workmanship display a degree of taste and mechanical ability which the Celtæ of North Britain seem never to have possessed ; that the eastern shores of the German Ocean abound in similar monuments which, to a complexity of ornament not more decidedly Runic, add the Runic inscription ; and that the tradition just related which, wild as it may appear, can hardly be deemed less authentic than the one opposed to it,—seeing that it belongs to a district still peopled by the old inhabitants of the country, whereas the other seems restricted to the lowlands of Moray,—assigns their erection, not to the natives, but to their rapacious and unwelcome visitors, the Danes. The reader may perhaps indulge me in a few descriptive notices of the three stones connected with the tradition ;—they all lie within six miles of Cromarty, and their weathered

and mossy planes, roughened with complicated tracery and doubtful hieroglyphics, may be regarded as pages of provincial history,—as pages, however, which we must copy rather than translate. May I not urge, besides, that men who have visited Egypt to examine monuments not much more curious, have written folios on their return?

The obelisk at Hilton, though perhaps the most elegant of its class in Scotland, is less known than any of the other two, and it has fared more hardly. For, about two centuries ago it was taken down by some barbarous mason of Ross, who converted it into a tombstone, by erasing the neat mysterious hieroglyphics of one of the sides, and engraving on the place which they had occupied a rude shield and label, and the following laughable inscription; no bad specimen, by the bye, of the taste and judgment which could destroy so interesting a monument, and of that fortuitous species of wit which lies within the reach of accident, and of accident alone.

HE · THAT · LIVES · WEIL · DYES · WEIL · SAYS · SOLOMON
THE · WISE.

HEIR · LYES · ALEXANDER · DVFF · AND · HIS · THRIE · WIVES.

The side of the obelisk which the chisel has spared, is surrounded by a broad border, embossed in a style of ornament that would hardly disgrace the frieze of an Athenian portico;—the centre is thickly occupied by the figures of men, some on horseback, some afoot,—of wild and tame animals, musical instruments, and weapons of war and of the chase. The stone of Shandwick is still standing, and bears on the side which

corresponds to the obliterated surface of the other, the figure of a large cross, composed of circular knobs wrought into an involved and intricate species of fret-work which seems formed by the twisting of myriads of snakes. In the spaces on the sides of the shaft there are two huge, clumsy looking animals, the one resembling an elephant, the other a lion ; over each of these a St. Andrew seems leaning forward from his cross ; and on the reverse of the obelisk the sculpture represents processions, hunting scenes, and combats.—These, however, are but meagre notices ;—the obelisk at Nigg I shall describe more minutely as an average specimen of the class to which it belongs.

It stands in the parish burying ground, beside the eastern gable of the church ; and bears on one of its sides, like the stone at Shandwick, a large cross which, it may be remarked, rather resembles that of the Greek than of the Roman church, and on the other a richly embossed frame, enclosing, like the border of the obelisk at Hilton, the figures of a crowded assemblage of men and animals. Beneath the arms of the cross the surface is divided into four oblong compartments, and there are three above ; one on each side, which form complete squares, and one atop which, like the pediment of a portico, is of a triangular shape. In the lower angle of this upper compartment, two priest-like figures, attired in long garments, and furnished each with a book, incline forwards in the attitude of prayer ; and in the centre between them there is a circular cake or wafer, which a dove, descending from above, holds in its bill. Two dogs seem starting towards the wafer from either side ; and directly under

it there is a figure so much weathered, that it may be deemed to represent, as fancy may determine, either a little circular table, or the sacramental cup.—A pictorial record cannot be other than a doubtful one ; and it is difficult to decide whether the hieroglyphic of this department denotes the ghostly influence of the priest in delivering the soul from the evils of an intermediate state ; for, at a slight expense of conjectural analogy, we may premise that the mysterious dove descends in answer to the prayer of the two kneeling figures to deliver the little emblematical cake from the “ power of the dog ; ”—or, whether it may not represent a treaty of peace between rival chiefs whose previous hostility may be symbolized by the two fierce animals below, and their pacific intentions by the bird above, and who ratify the contract by an oath, solemnized over the book, the cup, and the wafer. A very few such explanations might tempt one to quote the well known story of the Professor of signs and the Aberdeen butcher ; the weight of the evidence, however, rests apparently with those who adopt the last. We see the locks of the kneeling figures curling upon their shoulders in unclerical profusion ; while the presence of the two books, with the absence of any written inscription, seem characteristic of the mutual memorial of tribes, who, though not wholly illiterate, possess no common language save the very doubtful language of symbol. If we hold further that the stone is of Scandinavian origin,—and it seems a rather difficult matter to arrive at a different conclusion, we can hardly suppose that the natives should have left unmutilated the monument of a people so little beloved, had they had

no part in what it records, or no interest in its preservation.

We pass to the other compartments ;—some of these and the plane of the cross are occupied by a species of fret-work exceedingly involved and complicated, but formed, notwithstanding, on regular mathematical figures. There are others which contain squares of elegantly arrayed tracery, designed in a style which we can almost identify with that of the border illuminations of our older manuscripts, or of the ornaments, imitative of these, which occur in works printed during the reigns of Elizabeth and James. But what seem the more curious compartments of the stone are embossed into rows of circular knobs, covered over, as if by basket work, with the intricate foldings of myriads of snakes ; and which may be either deemed to allude to the serpent and apple of the Fall,—thus placed in no inapt neighbourhood to the cross ; or to symbolize (for even the knobs may be supposed to consist wholly of serpents) that of which the serpent has ever been held emblematic, and which we cannot regard as less appositely introduced,—a complex wisdom, or an incomprehensible eternity.

The hieroglyphics of the opposite side are in lower relief, and though the various fret-work of the border is executed in a style of much elegance, the whole seems to owe less to the care of the sculptor. The centre is occupied by what, from its size, we may deem the chief figure of the group ;—it is that of a man attired in long garments, caressing a fawn ; and directly fronting him, there are the figures of a lamb

and a harp. The whole is, perhaps, emblematical of peace, and may be supposed to tell the same story with the upper hieroglyphic of the reverse. In the space beneath there is the figure of a man furnished with cymbals which he seems clashing with much glee, and that of a horse and its rider, surrounded by animals of the chase ; while in the upper part of the stone there are dogs, deer, an armed huntsman, and surmounting the whole, an eagle or raven. It may not be deemed unworthy of remark, that the style of the more complex ornaments of this stone very much resembles that which seems to obtain in the sculptures and tatooings of the New-Zealander. We see exhibited in both the same intricate regularity of pattern, and almost similar combinations of the same waving lines. And we are led to infer, that though the rude Scandinavian of perhaps nine centuries ago had travelled a long stage in advance of the New-Zealander of our own times, he had yet his ideas of the beautiful cast in nearly the same mould. Is it not a truly wonderful fact, that man, in his advances towards the just and graceful in design, proceeds not from the simple to the complex, but from the complex to the simple ?

The slope of the northern Sutor which fronts the town of Cromarty, terminates about a hundred and fifty feet above the level of the shore in a precipitous declivity surmounted by a little green knoll which, for the last six centuries has borne the name of Dunskaith. (*i. e.* the fort of mischief.) And in its immediate vicinity there is a high lying farm, known all over the country as the farm of Castle-Craig. The prospect from the

edge of the eminence is one of the finest in the kingdom,—superior even to the one which I have attempted to describe in a previous chapter. We may survey the entire frith of Cromarty spread out before us as in a map; the town, though on the opposite shore, seems so completely under our view that we think of looking into its streets; and yet the distance is sufficient to conceal all but what is pleasing in it. The eye in travelling over the country beyond ascends delighted through the various regions of corn, and wood, and moor, and then expatiates unfatigued amid a wilderness of blue-peaked hills. And where the land terminates towards the east we may see the dark abrupt cliffs of the southern Sutor flinging their shadows half way across the opening, and distinguish among the lofty crags, which rise to oppose them, the jagged and serrated shelves of the Diamond-rock,—a tall beetling precipice which once bore, if we may trust to tradition, a wondrous gem in its forehead. Often, says the legend, has the benighted boatman gazed from amid the darkness, as he came rowing along the shore, on its clear beacon-like flame, which, streaming from the rock, threw a long fiery strip athwart the water; and the mariners of other countries have enquired whether the light which they saw shining so high among the cliffs, right over their mast, did not proceed from the shrine of some saint, or the cell of some hermit. But like the carbuncle of the Ward-hill of Hoy, of which the author of *Waverley* makes so poetical a use, “ though it gleamed ruddy as a furnace to them who viewed it from beneath, it ever became invisible to him whose daring

foot had scaled the precipices from whence it darted its splendour." An old campaigner who fought under Abercromby has told me that he has listened to stories of the Diamond-rock of Cromarty amid the sand wastes of Egypt; but the jewel has long since disappeared, and we see only the rock. And now the eye after completing its circuit, rests on the eminence of Dunskaith;—the site of a royal fortress erected by William the Lion, to repress, says Lord Hailes, in his *Annals of Scotland*, the oft recurring rebellions and disorders of Ross-shire. We can still trace the moat of the citadel, and part of an outwork which rises towards the hill; but the walls have sunk into low grassy mounds, and the line of the outer moat has long since been effaced by the plough.—The disorders of Ross-shire seem to have outlived, by many ages, the fortress raised to suppress them. I need hardly advert to a story so well known as that of the robber of this province who nailed horse-shoes to the feet of the poor widow who had threatened him with the vengeance of James I., and who, with twelve of his followers, was brought to Edinburgh by that monarch, to be horse-shoed in turn. Even so late as the reign of James VI. the clans of Ross are classed among the peculiarly obnoxious, in an Act for the punishment of theft, rief, and oppression.

Between the times of Macbeth, and an age comparatively recent, there occurs a wide chasm in the history of Cromarty. The Thane, magnified by the atmosphere of poetry which surrounds him, towers like a giant over the remoter brink of the gap, while, in apparent opposition to every law of perspective, the

people on its nearer edge seem diminished into pigmies. And yet the Urquharts of Cromarty—though Sir Thomas, in his zeal for their honour, has dealt by them as the poets of ancient Greece did by the early history of their country—were a family of considerable antiquity and power. The editor of the second edition of Sir Thomas's *Jewel*, which was not published until the first had been more than a hundred years out of print, states in his advertisement that he had compared the genealogy of his author with another genealogy of the family in the possession of the Lord Lion of Scotland, and that from the reign of Alexander II. to that of Charles I. he had found them perfectly to agree. It is said too—and the testimony of an anonymous writer has need of some such corroboration—that in the old castle of Cromarty there were the initials of several of the earlier Urquharts united to dates of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. The lands of the family extended from the farthest point of the southern Sutor to the hill of *Kinbeakie*, (*i. e.* end of the living) a tract which includes the parishes of Cromarty, Kirk-Michael, and Cullicuden; and, prior to the imprisonment and exile of Sir Thomas, he was vested with the patronage of the churches of these parishes, and the admiralty of the eastern coast of Scotland, from Caithness to Inverness.

The first of his ancestors, whose story receives some shadow of confirmation from tradition, was a cotemporary of Wallace and the Bruce. When ejected from his castle, he is said to have regained it from the English by a stratagem, and to have held it out with only forty men for about seven years. “During that

time," says Sir Thomas, "his lands were wasted and his woods burnt; and having nothing he could properly call his own but the moat hill of Cromarty, which he maintained in defiance of all the efforts of the enemy, he was agnamed *Gulielmus de monte alto*. At length," continues the genealogist, "he was relieved by Sir William Wallace, who raised the siege after defeating the English in a little den or hollow about two miles from the town." Tradition, though silent respecting the siege, is more explicit than Sir Thomas in her details of the battle.

Somewhat more than four miles to the south of Cromarty, and about the middle of the mountainous ridge which, stretching from the Sutors to the village of Rosemarkie, overhangs at the one edge the shores of the Moray Frith, and sinks on the other into a broken moor, there is a little wooded eminence. Like the ridge which it overtops, it sweeps gradually towards the east until it terminates in an abrupt precipice that overhangs the sea, and slopes upon the west into a marshy hollow, known to the elderly people of the last age and a very few of the present as *Wallace-slack*. The direct line of communication with the southern districts, to travellers who cross the frith at the narrow strait of Ardersier, passes within a few yards of the hollow. And when, sometime during the wars of Edward, a strong body of English troops were marching by this route to join another strong body encamped in the peninsula of Easter Ross, this circumstance is said to have pointed it out to Wallace as a fit place for forming an ambuscade. From the eminence which overtops it, the spectator can look

down on a wide tract of country, while the ravine itself is concealed by a flat tubercle of the moor, which, to the traveller approaching from the south or west, seems the base of the eminence. The stratagem succeeded ; the English, surprised and panic-struck, were defeated with much slaughter, six hundred being left dead in the scene of the attack ; and the survivors, closely pursued and wholly unacquainted with the country, fled towards the north along the ridge of hill which terminates at the bay of Cromarty. From the top of the ridge the two Sutors seem piled the one over the other, and so shut up the opening, that the bay within assumes the appearance of a lake ; and the English deeming it such, pressed onward, in the hope that a continued tract of land stretched between them and their countrymen on the opposite shore. They were only undeceived when, on climbing the southern Sutor, where it rises behind the town, they saw an arm of the sea more than a mile in width, and skirted by abrupt and dizzy precipices, opening before them ;—an angry enemy pressed upon them from behind. The spot is still pointed out where they are said to have made their final stand ; and a few shapeless hillocks, that may still be seen among the trees, are said to have been raised above the bodies of those who fell ; while the survivors, for they were soon beaten from this position, were either driven over the neighbouring precipices, or perished amid the waves of the frith.—Wallace, on another occasion, is said to have fled for refuge to a cave of the Sutors ; and his metrical historian, after narrating his exploits at Dun-otter and Aberdeen, describes him as having

“ At Cromartie richt mony Southron endit.”

Of all the humbler poets of Scotland, and where is there a country with more ! there is hardly one who has not sung in praise of Wallace. His exploit, as we find it recorded in the Jewel, connected with the tradition of the cave, has been narrated by the muse of a provincial poet, who published a volume of poems at Inverness about five years ago ; and, in the lack of less questionable materials for this part of my history, I avail myself of his poem.

Of old, when Scotia's chiefs of might
Sought different sides ere closed the fight ;
When sunk in heart our country lay,
To wasting ills an easy prey,
Domestic feud and foreign sway ;
Foretold of Heaven, a patriot rose,
Whom none could fly, and none oppose,
Whose heart ne'er lodged a selfish aim,
Nor thought nor wish that vice could claim ;
Of giant frame and giant mind,
He tower'd the first of human kind.

Nay, wanton Muse—though Wallace thought,
Felt, dared, and died as patriot ought,
Such praise as thine were ill applied
To him, or mortal man beside,
Save one :—and Muse, in lay profane
To name that one, were worse than vain.

Thus ran the tale :—proud England's host
Lay 'trench'd on Croma's winding coast,
And rose the Urquhart's towers beneath
Fierce shouts of wars, deep groans of death.
The Wallace heard ;—from Moray's shore
One little bark his warriors bore.
But died the breeze, and rose the day,
Ere gain'd that bark the destined bay ;
When, lo ! these rocks a quay supplied,
These yawning caves meet shades to hide.

Secure, where rank the nightshade grew,
And patter'd thick the unwholesome dew,
Patient of cold and gloom they lay,
Till eve's last light had died away.

It died away ;—in Croma's hall
No flame glanced on the trophied wall,
Nor sound of mirth nor revel free,
Was heard where joy had wont to be.
With day had ceased the siege's din,
But still gaunt famine raged within.

In chamber lone, on weary bed,
That castle's wounded lord was laid ;
His woe-worn lady watch'd beside.
To pain devote, and grief, and gloom,
No taper cheer'd the darksome room ;
Yet to the wounded chieftain's sight
Strange shapes were there, and sheets of light ;
And oft he spoke, in jargon vain,
Of ruthless deed, and tyrant reign,
For maddening fever fir'd his brain.

O hark ! the warder's rousing call,—
“ Rise, warriors, rise, and man the wall ! ”
Starts up the chief, but rack'd with pain,
And weak, he backward sinks again :
“ O Heaven, they come ! ” the lady cries,
“ The Southrons come, and Urquhart dies ! ”

Nay, 'tis not fever mocks his sight ;
His broidered couch is red with light ;
In light his lady stands confest,
Her hands clasp'd on her heaving breast.
And hark ; wild shouts assail the ear,
Loud and more loud, near and more near
They rise !—hark, frequent rings the blade,
On crested helm relentless laid ;
Yells, groans, sharp sounds of smitten mail,
And war-cries load the midnight gale ;
O hark ! like Heaven's own thunder high,
Swells o'er the rest one ceaseless cry,

Racking the dull cold ear of night,
 "The Wallace wight!—the Wallace wight!"

Yes, gleams the sword of Wallace there,
 Unused his country's foes to spare;
 Roars the red camp like funeral pyre,
 One wild, wide, wasteful sea of fire;
 Glow red the low brow'd clouds of night,
 The wooded hill is bath'd in light,
 Gleams wave, and field, and turret height.
 Death's vassals dog the spoiler's horde,
 Burns in their front the unsparing sword;
 The fir'd camp casts its volumes o'er;
 Behind spreads wide a skiffless shore;
 Fire, flood, and sword, conspire to slay.
 How sad shall rest morn's early ray
 On blacken'd strand, and crimson'd main.
 On floods of gore, and hills of slain;
 But bright its cheering beams shall fall
 Where mirth whoops in the Urquharts' Hall.

* * *

There occurs in our narrative another wide chasm, which extends from the times of Wallace to the reign of James IV. Like the earlier gap, however, it might be filled up by a recital of events, which, though they belong properly to the history of the neighbouring districts, must have affected, in no slight degree, the interests and passions of the people of Cromarty. Among these we may reckon the descents on Ross by the Lords of the Isles, which terminated in the battles of Harlaw and Driemderfat, and that contest between the Macintoshes and Munros, which took place in the same century at the village of Clachnaherry. I might avail myself, too, on a similar principle, of the pilgrimage of James IV. to the chapel of St. Dothus, near Tain. Who doubts that the people would have found

much to admire in the showy humility of so gay a king? But as all these events have, like the story of Macbeth, been appropriated by the historians of the kingdom, they are already familiar to the general reader. In an after age, Cromarty, like Tain, was honoured by a visit from royalty. I find it stated by Calderwood, that, in the year 1589, on the discovery of Huntly's conspiracy, and the discomfiture of his followers at the Bridge of Dee, James VI. rode to Aberdeen, ostensibly with the intention of holding justice courts on the delinquents, but that deputing the business of trial to certain judges whom he instructed to act with a lenity which the historian condemns, he set out on a hunting expedition to Cromarty, from which he returned after an absence of about twenty days.

We find not a great deal less of the savage in the records of these latter times than in those of the darker periods which went before. Life and property seem to have been hardly more secure, especially in those hapless districts which, bordering on the Highlands, may be regarded as the battle fields on which needy barbarism, and the imperfectly formed vanguard of a slowly advancing civilization, contended for the mastery. Early in the reign of James IV. the lands of Cromarty were wasted by a combination of the neighbouring clans, headed by Huchon Rose of Kilravock, Macintosh of Macintosh, and Fraser of Lovat; and so complete was the spoliation that the entire property of the inhabitants, to their very household furniture, was carried away. Restitution was afterwards enforced by the Lords of Council. We

find it decreed in the *Acta Dominorum Concilii* for 1492, that Huchon Rose of Kilravock do restore, content, and pay to Mr. Alexander Urquhart, sheriff of Cromarty, and his tenants, the various items carried off by him and his accomplices, viz. six hundred cows, one hundred horses, one thousand sheep, four hundred goats, two hundred swine, and four hundred bolls of victual; but how immense an amount of suffering must the foray have occasioned from which nothing could be subtracted by any after sentence of the law. Kilravock is said to have conciliated the justice-general on this occasion by resigning into his hands his grand-daughter, the heiress of Calder, then a child, and whose lands the wily magistrate secured to his family, by marrying her to one of his sons.

There lived, in the succeeding reign, a proprietor of Cromarty who, from the number of his children, received, says the genealogist, the title, or agname, of Paterhemon. He had twenty-five sons, who arrived at manhood, and eleven daughters, who ripened into women, and were married. Seven of the sons lost their lives at the battle of Pinkie; and there were some of the survivors who, settling in England, became the founders of families which, in the days of the Commonwealth, were possessed of considerable property and influence in Devonshire and Cumberland. Tradition tells the story of Paterhemon somewhat differently. His children, whom it diminishes to twenty, are described as robust and very handsome men; and he is said to have lived in the reign of Mary. On the visit of that princess to Inverness, and when, according to Buchanan, the Frasers and Mun-

ros, two of the most warlike clans of the country, were raised by their respective chieftains to defend her against the designs of Huntly, the Urquhart is said also to have marched to her assistance with a strong body of his vassals, and accompanied by all his sons, mounted on white horses. At the moment of his arrival Mary was engaged in reviewing the clans, and surrounded by the chiefs and her officers. The venerable chieftain rode up to her, and, dismounting with all the ease of a galliard of five-and-twenty, presented to her, as his best gift, his little troop of children. There is yet a third edition of the story:—About the year 1652, one Richard Franck, a native of the sister kingdom, and as devoted an angler as Isaac Walton himself, made the tour of Scotland, and then published a book descriptive of what he had seen. His notice of Cromarty is mostly summed up in a curious little anecdote of the patriarch, which he probably derived from some tradition current at the time of his visit. Sir Thomas he describes as his eldest son; and the number of his children who arrived at maturity he has increased to forty. “He had thirty sons and ten daughters,” says the tourist, “standing at once before him, and not one natural child amongst them.” Having attained the extreme verge of human life, he began to consider himself as already dead; and in the exercise of an imagination, which the genealogist seems to have inherited with his lands, he derived comfort from the daily repetition of a kind of ceremony, ingenious enough to challenge a comparison with any rite of the Romish church. For every

evening about sunset, being brought out in his couch to the base of a tower of the castle, he was raised up by pullies, slowly and gently, to the battlements ; and the ascent he deemed emblematical of the resurrection. Or to employ the more graphic language of the tourist,—“The declining age of this venerable laird of Urquhart, for he had now reached the utmost limit of life, invited him to contemplate mortality, and to cruciate himself by fancying his cradle his sepulchre ; therein, therefore, was he lodged night after night, and hauled up by pullies to the roof of his house, approaching, as near as the summits of its higher pinnacles would let him, to the beautiful battlements and suburbs of heaven.”

I find I must devote one other chapter to the consideration of the interesting remains, which form almost the sole materials of this earlier portion of my history. But the class of these to which I am now about to turn, are to be found, not on the face of the country, but locked up in the minds of the inhabitants. And they are falling much more rapidly into decay ;—mouldering away in their hidden recesses, like bodies of the dead, while the others, which more resemble the green mound and the monumental tablet, bid fair to abide the enquiry of coming generations. Those vestiges of ancient superstition, which are to be traced in the customs and manners of the common people, share, in a polite age, a very different fate from those impressions of it, if I may so express myself, which we find stamped upon matter. For when the just and liberal opinions which originate

with philosophers and men of genius are diffused over a whole people, a modification of the same good sense which leads the scholar to treasure up old beliefs and usages, serves to emancipate the peasant from their influence or observance.

CHAPTER VII.

She darklins grapit for the bauks,
And in the blue clue throws then.

BURNS.

VIOLENCE may anticipate by many centuries the natural progress of decay. There are some of our Scottish cathedrals less entire than some of our old Picts' houses, though the latter have been deserted for more than a thousand years, and the former for not more than three hundred. And the remark is not less applicable to the beliefs and usages of other ages, than to their more material remains. It is a curious fact, that we meet among the Protestants of Scotland with more marked traces of the Paganism of their earlier, than of the Popery of their later ancestors. For while Christianity seems to have been introduced into the country by slow degrees, and to have travelled over it by almost imperceptible stages,—leaving the less obnoxious practices of the mythology which it supplanted to the natural course of decay,—it is matter of history that the doctrines of the Reformation overspread it in a single age, and that the observances of the old system were effaced, not by a gradual current of popular opinion, but by the hasty surges of popular resentment. The saint days of the priest

have in consequence been long since forgotten,—the festivals of the Druid still survive.

There is little risk of our mistaking these latter :—the rites of Halloween, and the festivities of Beltane, possess well authenticated genealogies. There are other usages, however, which bearing no less strongly the impress of Paganism, shew a more uncertain lineage. And regarding these, we find it difficult to determine whether they have come down to us from the days of the old mythology, or have been produced in a later period by those sentiments of the human mind to which every false religion owes its origin. The subject, though a curious, is no very tangible one. But should I attempt throwing together a few simple thoughts on it, in that wandering desultory style which seems best to consort with its irregularity of outline, I trust I may calculate on the forbearance of the reader. I shall strive to be not very tedious, and shall choose a not very beaten path.

Man was made for the world, and the world for man. Hence we find that every faculty of the human mind has in the things which lie without some definite object, or particular class of circumstances on which to operate. There is a thorough adaptation of that which acts to that which is acted upon,—of the moving power to the machine ; and woe be to him who deranges this admirable order, in the hope of rendering it more complete. It is prettily fabled by the Bramins, that souls are moulded by pairs, and then sent to the earth to be linked together in wedlock, and that matches are unhappy merely in consequence of the parties disuniting by the way, and

choosing for themselves other consorts. One might find more in this fable than any Bramin ever found in it yet. There is a prospective connection of a similar kind formed between the powers of the mind and the objects on which these are to be employed, and should they be subsequently united to objects other than the legitimate, a wretchedness quite as real as that which arises out of an ill-mated marriage is the infallible result.

Were I asked to illustrate my meaning by an example or two, I do not know where I could find instances better suited to my purpose, than in the imaginative extravagancies of some of our wilder sectaries. There is no principle which so deals in unhappy marriages, and as unhappy divorces, as the fanatical, or that so ceaselessly employs itself in separating what Heaven has joined, and in joining what Heaven has separated. Man, I have said, was made for the world he lives in ;—I should have added, that he was intended also for another world. Fanaticism makes a somewhat similar omission, only it is the other way. It forgets that he is as certainly a denizen of the present as an heir of the future ; that the same Being who has imparted to him the truly noble sentiment which leads him to anticipate a hereafter, has also bestowed upon him a thousand lesser faculties, which must be employed now ; and that if he prove untrue to even the minor end of his existence, and slight his proper, though subordinate employments, the powers which he thus separates from their legitimate objects must, from the very activity of their nature, run riot in the cloisters in which they are shut up, and cast

reproach by their excesses on the cause to which they are so unwisely dedicated. For it is one thing to condemn these to a life of celibacy, and quite another to keep them chaste. We may shut them up, like a sisterhood of nuns, from the objects to which they ought to have been united, but they will infallibly discover some less legitimate ones with which to connect themselves. Self-love, and the natural desire of distinction,—proper enough sentiments in their own sphere,—make but sad work in any other. The imagination which was so bountifully given us to raise its ingenious theories as a kind of scaffolding to philosophical discovery, is active to worse purpose when revelling intoxicated amid the dim fields of prophecy, or behind the veil of the inner mysteries:—Reason itself, though a monarch in its own proper territories, can exert only a doubtful authority in the provinces which lie beyond. Indeed, the whole history of fanaticism, from when St. Anthony retired into the deserts of Upper Egypt, to burrow in a cell like a fox-earth, down to the times that witnessed some of the wilder heresiarchs of our own country, working what they had faith enough to deem miracles, is little else than a detail of the disorders occasioned by perversions of this nature.

There is an exhibition of phenomena equally curious when the religious sentiment, instead of thus swallowing up all the others, is deprived of even its own proper object. I once saw a solitary hen bullfinch, that retired one spring into a dark corner of her cage, and laid an egg, over which she sat until it was addled. It is always thus when the devotional

sentiment is left to form a religion for itself. Encaged like the poor bullfinch, it proves fruitful in just a similar way, and moping in its dark recesses, brings forth its pitiful abortions unassisted and alone. I have ever thought of the pantheons and mythological dictionaries of our libraries as a kind of museums, stored, like those of the anatomist, with embryos and abortions.

It must be remarked further, that the devotional sentiment operates in this way not only when its proper object is wanting, but even, should the mind be dark and uninformed, when that is present. Every false religion may be regarded as a wild irregular production, springing out of that basis of sentiment (one of the very foundations of our nature,) which, when rendered the subject of a right course of culture, and sown with the good seed, proves the proper field of the true. But on this field, even when occupied in the better way, there may be the weeds of a rank indigenous mythology shooting up below ;—a kind of subordinate superstition, which, in other circumstances, would have been not the underwood, but the forest. Hence our difficulty in fixing the genealogy of the Pagan-like usages to which I allude ;—there are two opposite sources, from either of which they may have sprung :—they may form a kind of undergrowth, thrown up at no very early period by a soil occupied by beliefs the most serious and rational, or they may constitute the ancient and broken vestiges of an obsolete and exploded mythology. I shall briefly describe a few of the more curious.

I. People acquainted with seafaring men, and who occasionally accompany them in their voyages, cannot

miss seeing them, when the sails are drooping against the mast, and the vessel lagging in her course, earnestly invoking the wind in a shrill tremulous whistling,—calling on it, in fact, in its own language ; and scarcely less confident of being answered than if preferring a common request to one of their companions. I rarely sail in calm weather with my friends the Cromarty fishermen, without seeing them thus employed,—their faces anxiously turned in the direction whence they expect the breeze ; now pausing, for a light uncertain air has begun to ruffle the water, and now resuming the call still more solicitously than before, for it has died away. On thoughtlessly beginning to whistle one evening about twelve years ago, when our skiff was staggering under a closely-reefed foresail, I was instantly silenced by one of the fishermen with a “ whisht, whisht, boy, we have more than wind enough already ;” and I remember being much struck for the first time by the singularity of the fact, that the winds should be as sincerely prayed to by our Scottish seamen of the present day, as by the mariners of Themistocles. There was another such practice common among the Cromarty fishermen of the last age, but it is now obsolete. It was termed soothing the waves. When beating up in stormy weather along a lee shore, it was customary for one of the men to take his place on the weather gunwale, and there continue waving his hand in a direction opposite to the sweep of the sea, in the belief that this species of appeal to it would induce it to lessen its force. We recognise in both these singular practices the workings of that religion natural to the heart, which, more vivid in its personifications

than poetry itself, can address itself to every power of nature as to a sentient being endowed with a faculty of will, and able, just as it inclines, either to aid or injure. The seaman's prayer to the winds, and the thirty thousand gods of the Greek, probably derive their origin from a similar source.

II. Viewed in the light of reason, an oath owes its sacredness, not to any virtue in itself, but to the Great Being to whom it is so direct an appeal, and to the good and rational belief that He knows all things, and is the ultimate judge of all. But the same uninformed principle which can regard the winds and waves as possessed of a power independent of His, seems also to have conferred on the oath an influence and divinity exclusively its own. I have met with many among the more grossly superstitious, who deem it a kind of ordeal, somewhat similar to the nine ploughshares of the dark ages, which distinguishes between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, by some occult intrinsic virtue. The innocent person swears, and like the guiltless woman when she had drunk the waters of jealousy, thrives none the worse ;—the guilty perjure themselves, and from that hour cease to prosper. It is a rather singular coincidence, and one which might lead us to believe in the existence of something analogous to principle in even the extravagancies, of human belief, that the only oath deemed binding on the gods of classical mythology,—the oath by the river Styx, was one of merely intrinsic power and virtue. Bacon, indeed, in his *Wisdom of the Ancients*, (a little book, but a great work,) has explained the fable as merely an ingenious allegory ; but who

does not know that the Father of modern philosophy found half the *Novum Organum* in superstitions which existed before the days of Orpheus?

III. There seems to have once obtained in this part of the country a belief that the natural sentiment of justice had its tutelary spirit, which, like the *Astræ* of the Greeks, existed for it, and for it alone; and which not only seconded the dictates of conscience, but even punished those by whom they were disregarded. The creed of superstition is, however, rarely a well-defined one; and this belief seems to have partaken fully as much as any of the others, of the obscurity in which it originated. The mysterious agent (the object of it) existed no one knew where, and effected its purposes no one knew how. But the traditions which illustrate it, narrate better than they define. Many years ago, says one of these, a woman of Tarbat was passing along the shores of Loch-Slin, with a large web of linen on her back. There was a market held that morning at Tain, and she was bringing the web there to be sold. In those times it was quite as customary for farmers to rear the flax which supplied them with clothing, as the corn which furnished them with food; and it was of course necessary in some of the earlier processes of preparing the former, to leave it for whole weeks spread out on the fields, with little else to trust to for its protection than the honesty of their neighbours. To the neighbours of at least this woman the protection was incomplete;—the very web she carried was composed of stolen lint. She had nearly reached the western extremity of the lake, when feeling fatigued, she seated herself by the

water edge, and laid down the web beside her. But no sooner had it touched the earth than up it bounded three Scots ells into the air, and slowly unrolling fold after fold, until it had stretched itself out as when on the bleaching-green, it flew into the middle of the lake, and disappeared for ever. There are several other stories of the same class, but the one related may serve as a specimen of the whole.

IV. The evils which men dread, and the appearances which they cannot understand, are invariably appropriated by superstition ; if her power extend not over the terrible and the mysterious, she is without power at all. And not only does she claim whatever is inexplicable in the great world, but also in some cases what seems mysterious in the little ; some, for instance, of the more paradoxical phenomena of human nature. It has been stated to me as a mysterious, unaccountable fact, that persons who have been rescued from drowning regard their deliverers ever after with a dislike which bounds almost on enmity. I have heard it affirmed, too, that when the crew of some boat or vessel have perished, with the exception of only one individual, the relatives of the deceased invariably regard that one with a deep, irrepressible hatred ; and in both cases the feelings described are said to originate in some occult and supernatural cause. Alas ! neither envy nor ingratitude lie out of our ordinary every-day walk. There occurs to me a little anecdote illustrative of this kind of apotheosis of the envious principle. Some fifty years ago there was a Cromarty boat wrecked on the rough shores of Eathie. All the crew perished, with the exception

of one fisherman ; and the poor man was so persecuted by the relatives of the drowned, who even threatened his life, that he was compelled, much against his inclination, to remove to Nairn. There, however, only a few years after, he was wrecked a second time, and, as in the first instance, proved the sole survivor of the crew. He was again, therefore, subjected to a persecution similar to the one he had already endured ; and he was compelled to quit Nairn as he had before quitted Cromarty. And in both cases the relatives of the deceased were deemed as entirely under the influence of a mysterious, irresistible impulse, which acted upon their minds from without, as the Orestis of the dramatist when pursued by the furies.

One may question, as has been already remarked, whether one sees, in those several instances, polytheism, forming, and but barely forming, in the human mind, or the mutilated remnants of a long exploded mythology. The usages to which I have alluded, as more certain in their lineage, are perhaps less suited to employ speculation. But they are curious ; and the fact that they are fast sinking into an oblivion, out of which the diligence of no future excavator can restore them, seems of itself to give them a kind of claim to our notice. I pass over Beltane ; its fires in this part of the country have long since been extinguished ; but to its half-surviving partner, Halloween, I shall devote a few pages ; and this the more readily, as it chances to be connected with a story of humble life which belongs to that period of my history at which I have now arrived. True, the festival itself

has already sat for its picture, and so admirable was the skill of the artist, that its very name recalls to us rather the masterly strokes of the transcript than the features of the original. But with all its truth and beauty, the portrait is not yet complete.

The Scottish Halloween, as held in the solitary farm-house and described by Burns, differed considerably from the Halloween of our villages and smaller towns. In the farm-house it was a night of prediction only ; in our towns and villages there were added a multitude of wild mischievous games which were tolerated at no other season,—a circumstance that seems to identify the festival with those pauses of licence peculiar to the nonage of civil government, in which men are set free from the laws they are just learning to respect ;—partly it would seem as a reward for the deference which they have paid them, partly to serve them as a kind of breathing spaces in which to recover from the unwonted fatigue of being obedient. After nightfall, the young fellows of the town formed themselves into parties of ten or a dozen, and breaking into the gardens of the graver inhabitants, stole the best and heaviest of their cabbages. Converting these into bludgeons, by stripping off the lower leaves, they next scoured the streets and lanes, thumping at every door as they passed, until their uncouth weapons were beaten to pieces. When disarmed in this way, all the parties united into one, and providing themselves with a cart, drove it before them, with the rapidity of a chaise and four, through the principal streets. Wo to the inadvertent female whom they encountered ! She was instantly laid hold of and

placed aloft in the cart,—brothers, and cousins, and even sons, it is said, not unfrequently assisting in the capture ; and then dragged backwards and forwards over the rough stones, amid shouts, and screams, and roars of laughter. The youngers within doors were meanwhile engaged in a manner somewhat less annoying but not a whit less whimsical. The bent of their ingenuity for weeks before, had been turned to the accumulating of little hoards of apples,—all for this night ; and now a large tub filled with water, was placed in the middle of the floor of some out-house, carefully dressed up for the occasion ; and into the tub every one of the party flung an apple. They then approached it by turns, and placing their hands on the edges, plunged forward to fish for the fruit with their teeth. I remember the main chance of success was to thrust the head fearlessly into the tub, amid the booming of the water, taking especial care to press down one of the apples in a line with the mouth, and to seize it when jammed against the bottom. When the whole party, with their dripping locks and shining faces, would seem metamorphosed into so many mermaids, this sport usually gave place to another :—A small beam of wood was suspended from the ceiling by a cord, and when fairly balanced, an apple was fastened to the one end, and a lighted candle to the other. It was then whirled round, and the boys, in turn, as before, leaped up and bit at the fruit. Neither of these games were peculiar to the north of Scotland : we find it stated by Mr. Polewhele, in his *Historical Views of Devonshire*, that the Irish peasants assembled on the eve of *La Samon* (the 2d

November), to celebrate the festival of the sun, with many rites derived from Paganism, among which was the dipping for apples in a tub of water, and the catching at an apple stuck on the one end of a kind of hanging beam.

There belonged to the north of Scotland two Halloween rites of augury, which have not been described by Burns ; and one of these, an elegant and beautiful charm, is not yet entirely out of repute. An ale-glass is filled with pure water, and into the water is dropped the white of an egg. The female, whose future fortunes are to be disclosed, (for the charm seems appropriated exclusively by the better sex) lays her hand on the glass's mouth, and holds it there for the space of about a minute. In that time the heavier parts of the white settle to the bottom, while the lighter shoot up into the water, from which they are distinguished by their opacity, into a variety of fantastic shapes, resembling towers, and domes, towns, fleets, and forests, or to speak more correctly, into forms not very unlike those icicles which one sees during a severe frost at the edge of a waterfall. A resemblance is next traced, which is termed reading the glass, between the images displayed in it and some objects of either art or nature ; and these are deemed to constitute a hieroglyphic of the person's future fortunes. Thus, the ramparts of a fortress surmounted by streamers, a plain covered with armies, or the tents of an encampment, show that the female whose hand covered the glass is to be united to a soldier, and that her life is to be spent in camps and garrisons. A fleet of ships, a church or pulpit, a half-finished building,

a field stripped into furrows, a garden, a forest,—all these and fifty other scenes, afford symbols equally unequivocal. And there are melancholy hieroglyphics, too, that speak of death when enquired at regarding marriage ;—there are the solitary tomb, the fringed shroud, the coffin, and the scull and cross bones. “ Ah,” said a young girl whom I overheard a few years ago regretting the loss of a deceased companion, “ Ah, I knew when she first took ill that there was little to hope. Last Halloween she and I went to Mrs. ——— to break our eggs. Betsie’s was first cast, and there rose under her hand an ugly scull. Mrs. ——— said nothing, but reversed the glass, while poor Betsie laid her hand on it a second time, and then there rose a coffin. Mrs. ——— called it a boat, and I said I saw the oars ; but Mrs. ——— well knew what it meant, and so did I.”

I would fain see on canvass, in the Hall of our Northern Institution, a faithful transcript of the scene which first made me deem the charm of the egg an elegant one. Imagine a tall thin sibyl, her grey hair escaping from her coif, standing on the floor of a Highland cottage. She holds in her one hand a torch of mire fir, that flares, and smokes, and sputters like the torch of Hymen when it burns worst, a vessel of crystal that glitters to the flame, like the vase of St. John, is balanced in the other. Imagine further a yellow-haired sylph, half girl half woman, and rich in the blended loveliness of both, standing by the side of the prophetess. Her white fingers rest on the bony shoulder ; and her eyes, full of an expression that seems to speak of a discovered secret, glance alter-

nately from the high sharp features of the sibyl to the picture in the glass. A still younger girl is bending forward with a roguish-looking smile ; three others are tittering behind ; and still farther in the background there are two individuals of the rougher sex seated by the cottage fire : the one, a benevolent silver-headed old man, regards the scene before him as interesting ; not from its ostensible connection with the future—that good-humoured smile betrays the sceptic—but from his deeming it a pleasing exhibition of human passion ; the other, a mere lad, has only glanced on it when it fades from before him, and he stands in the midst of ancient Rome, under the marble portico of a gorgeous temple. He beholds the area thronged with priests and warriors ; and in the midst, before the altar, he sees a dark-browed old man—one of the butcher-like augurs of ancient heathenism—who bends over his slaughtered victims, and judges of future events from the convulsions of the limbs, and the state and position of the entrails. Is not the first the more pleasing and elegant picture !

The other north country charm, which, of Celtic origin, bears evidently the impress of the romance and melancholy so predominant in the Celtic character, is only known and practised (if, indeed, still practised any where) in a few places of the remote Highlands. The person who intends trying it must steal out unperceived to a field whose furrows lie due south and north, and, entering at the western side, must proceed slowly over eleven ridges, and stand in the centre of the twelfth, when he will hear either low sobs and faint mournful shrieks which betoken his early death, or the sounds

of music and dancing, which foretell his marriage. But the charm is accounted dangerous. About twelve years ago I spent an autumn in the mid-Highlands of Ross-shire, where I passed my Halloween, with nearly a dozen young people, at a farm house. We burned nuts, and ate apples ; and when we had exhausted our stock of both, some of us proposed to set out for the steading of a neighbouring farm, and rob the garden of its cabbages ; but the motion was over-ruled by the female members of the party ; for the night was pitch dark, and the way rough ; and so we had recourse for amusement to story telling. Naturally enough, most of our stories were of Halloween rites and predictions ; and much was spoken regarding the charm of the rig. I had never heard of it before ; and, out of a frolic, I stole away to a field, whose furrows lay in the proper direction, and after pacing steadily across the ridges, until I had reached the middle of the twelfth, I stood and listened. But spirits were not abroad :—I heard only the wind groaning in the woods, and the deep sullen roar of the Conan. On my return I was greeted with acclamations of wonder and terror, and it was remarked that I looked deadly pale, and had certainly heard something very terrible. “ But whatever you may have been threatened with,” said the author of the remark, “ you may congratulate yourself on your being among us in your right mind ; for there are instances of people returning from the twelfth rig raving mad ; and of others who went to it as light of heart as you, who never returned at all.”

The Maccullochs of the parish of Croparty, a family now extinct, were, for about two centuries, sub-

stantial, respectable farmers. The first of this family, says tradition, was Alaster Macculloch, a native of the Highlands. When a boy he quitted the house of his widow mother, and wandered into the low country in quest of employment, which he at length succeeded in procuring in the parish of Cromarty, on the farm of an old wealthy tacksman. For the first few weeks he seemed to be one of the gloomiest little fellows ever bred among the solitudes of the hills ;—all the social feelings of his nature had been frozen within him ; but they began to flow apace ; and it was soon discovered that neither reserve nor melancholy formed any part of his real character. A little of the pride of the Celt he still retained ; when he attended Chapel he wore a gemmy suit of green tartan, and his father's dirk always depended from his belt ; but, in every other respect he seemed a true Lowland Scot, and not one of his companions equalled him in sly humour, or could play off a practical joke with half the effect.

His master was a widower, and the father of an only daughter, a laughing, warm hearted girl of nineteen. She had more lovers than half the girls of the parish put together ; and when they avowed to her their very sincere attachment, she tendered them her very hearty thanks in return. But then one's affections are not in one's own power ; and as certainly as they loved her just because they could not help it, so certainly was she indifferent to them from the same cause. Their number received one last accession in little Alaster the herd boy. He shared in the kindness of his young mistress, and his cattle shared in it too, with every living thing connected with her father

or his farm ; but his love, his soul-engrossing love, lay silent within him, and young and sanguine as he was, almost without hope. Not that he was unhappy. He had the knack of dreaming when broad awake, and of making his dreams as pleasant as he willed them ; and so his passion rather increased than diminished the amount of his happiness. It taught him, too, the very best species of politeness,—that of the heart ; and young Lillias could not but help wondering where it was that the manners of the red-cheeked Highland boy had received so exquisite a polish, and why it was that she herself was so much the object of his quiet unobtrusive attentions. When night released him from labour, he would take up his seat in some dark corner of the house, that commanded a full view of the fire, and there would he sit for whole hours, gazing on the features of his mistress. A fine woman looks well by any light, even by that of a peat fire ; and fine women, it is said, know this ; but little thought the maiden of the farm house of the saint-like halo which, in the imagination of her silent worshipper, the red smoky flames shed around her. How could she even dream of it ! The boy Alaster was fully five years younger than herself, and it surely could not be forgotten that he herded her father's cattle. The incident, however, which I am just going to relate gave her sufficient cause to think of him as a lover.

The Halloween of the year 1560, was a very different thing in the parish of Cromarty from that of the year 1834. It is now as dark and opaque a night, unless it chance to be brightened by the moon, as any in the winter season ; it was then clear as the glass of

a magician ;—people looked through it and saw the future. Late in October that year, Alaster overheard his mistress and one of her youthful companions,—the daughter of a neighbouring farmer, talking over the rites of the coming night of frolic and prediction. “ Will you really venture on throwing the clew ? ” asked her companion, “ the kiln, you ken, is dark and lonely ; and you ken too that there’s mony a story no true if folk hav’na often been frightened.” “ Throw it ;—O, surely,” replied the other ; “ who would think it worth while to harm the like o’ me ; and besides, you can bide for me just a wee bittie aff. One would like, somehow, to know the name o’ one’s gudeman, or whether one is to get a gudeman at all.” Alaster was a lover, and lovers are fertile in strata-gem. In the presence of his mistress he sought leave from the old man, her father, with whom he was a great favourite, to spend his Halloween at a cottage on a neighbouring farm, where there were several young people to meet ; and his request was readily granted. The long expected evening came ; and Alaster set out for the cottage, without any intention of reaching it for at least two hours. When he had proceeded a little way he turned back, crept warily towards the kiln, climbed like a wild cat up the rough circular gable, entered by the chimney, and in a few seconds was snugly seated amid the ashes of the furnace. There he waited for a full hour, listening to the beatings of his own heart. At length a light foot-step was heard approaching ; the key was applied to the lock, and as the door opened, a square patch of moonshine fell upon the rude wall of the kiln. A tall

figure stepped timidly forward, and stood in the stream of faint light. It was Alaster's young mistress. She looked fearfully round her, and then producing a small clue of yarn, she threw it towards Alaster, and immediately began to wind.* He suffered it to turn round and round among the ashes, and then cautiously laid hold on it. "Wha hauds?" said his mistress, in a low startled whisper, looking, as she spoke, over her shoulder towards the door; "Alaster Macculloch," was the reply; and in a moment she had vanished like a spectre. Soon after the tread of two persons was heard approaching the door. It was now Alaster's turn to tremble. "Ah!" he thought, "I shall be discovered, and my stratagem shall come to worse than nothing." "An' did ye hear ony thing when you came out yon gate?" said one of the persons without. "O naething, lass, naething," replied the other, in a voice whose faintest echoes would have been recognised by the lover within, "steek too the door an' lock it;—its a foolish conceit." The door was accordingly locked, and Alaster left to find his way out in the manner he had entered.

It was late that night before he returned from the cottage to which, after leaving the kiln, he had gone. Next day he saw his mistress. She by no means exhibited her most amiable phasis of character, for she was cold and distant, and not a little cross. In short, it was evident she had a quarrel with destiny. This mood, however, soon changed for the one natural to her; years passed away, and suitor after suitor was

* See Burns's Halloween.

rejected by the maiden, until, in her twenty-fourth year, Alaster Macculloch paid her his addresses. He was not then a little herd boy, but a tall, handsome, young man of nineteen, who, active and faithful, was entrusted by his master with the sole management of his farm. A belief in destiny often becomes a destiny of itself; and it became such to Alaster's mistress. How could the predestined husband be other than a successful lover. In a few weeks they were married; and when the old man was gathered to his fathers, his son-in-law succeeded to his well-stocked farm.

CHAPTER VIII.

Subtill muldrie wrocht mony day agone.

GAVIN DOUGLASS.

As house after house in the old town of Cromarty was yielding its place to the sea, the inhabitants were engaged in building new dwellings for themselves, in the fields behind. A second town was thus formed, the greater part of which has since also disappeared, though under the influence of causes less violent than those which annihilated the first. Shortly after the Union, the trade of the place, which, prior to that event, had been pretty considerable, fell into decay, and the town gradually dwindled in size and importance until about the year 1750, when it had sunk into an inconsiderable village. After this period, however, trade began to revive, and the town again to increase; and as the old site was deemed inconveniently distant from the harbour, it was changed for the present. The main street of this second town, which is still used as a road, and bears the name of the Old Causeway, is situated about two hundred yards to the east of the houses, and is now bounded by the fences of gardens and fields, with here and there an antique-looking, high-gabled domicile rising over it. A row of large trees, which have sprung up since the disappearance of the town, runs along one of the fences.

About the beginning of the last century the Old Causeway presented an aspect which, though a little less rural than at present, was still more picturesque. An irregular line of houses thrust forward their gables on either side, like two parties of ill-trained cavalry drawn up for the charge;—some juttred forward, others slunk backward, some slanted sideways, as if meditating a retreat, others, as if more decided, seemed in the act of turning round. They varied in size and character, from the little sod-covered cottage, with round moor stones sticking out of its mud walls, like sculls in the famous pyramid of Malta, to the tall narrow house of three stories, with its court and gateway. Between every two buildings there intervened a deep narrow close, bounded by the back of one tenement, and the front of another, and terminating in a little oblong garden, fringed with a deep border of nettles, and bearing in the centre plots of cabbage and parsnips;—the latter being a root much used before the introduction of the potato. Here and there a gigantic ash or elm sprung out of the fence, and shot its ponderous arms over the houses. A low door, somewhat under five feet, and a few stone steps which descended from the level of the soil to that of the floor, (for the latter was invariably sunk from one to three feet beneath the former,) gave access to each of the meaner class of buildings. One little window, with the sill scarcely raised above the pavement, fronted the street, another, still smaller and equally low, opened to the close. They admitted through their unbevelled apertures and diminutive panes of brownish yellow a sort of uncertain twilight,

which lasted in the brighter kind of weather from sunrise to near sunset, and then gave place to total darkness. An immense chimney, designed for the drying of fish, which formed the staple food of the poorer inhabitants, stretched from the edge of the window in the gable to near the opposite wall, and on the huge black lintel were inscribed, in rude characters, the name of the builder of the tenement, and that of his wife, with the date of the erection. The walls, naked and uneven, were hollowed in several places into little square recesses, termed *bowels*; and at a height of not more than six feet above the floor, which was formed of clay and stone, and marvellously uneven, were the bare rafters varnished over with smoke.

The larger houses were built in a style much superior to this, but in one equally characteristic of the age and country. A taste for ornamental masonry was more prevalent in our Scottish villages about the beginning of the seventeenth century than at present. Palladio began to be studied about that period, by a few architects of the southern parts of the kingdom, and some of our provincial builders had picked up from them an imperfect acquaintance with the old classical style of architecture; but as they could avail themselves of only a few of its forms, and knew nothing of its proportions, they became, all unwittingly, the founders of a kind of school of their own. And some of the houses of the old town were no bad specimens of this half Grecian, half Gothic school. The high, narrow gables, jagged like the teeth of a saw, the diminutive, heavily-framed windows, and cham-

fered rybats, remained unaltered ; but there were stuck round the low doors, which still retained their Gothic proportions, imitations of Palladio's simpler door-pieces, and huge Grecian cornices, more than sufficiently massy for a hall twenty feet in height, with circular pateras designed in the same taste, and roughened with vile imitations of the vine and laurel, adorned the better rooms within. The closes leading to buildings of this superior class, were lintelled at the entrance, and over each lintel there was fixed a tablet of stone, bearing the arms and name of the proprietor. A large house of this kind, on the eastern side of the street, was haunted, it was said, by a green lady, one of the old Scottish spectres, who flourished before the introduction of shrouds and dead linens ; and another on the opposite side, by a capricious brownie, who disarranged the pieces of furniture and the platters every night the domestics set them in order, and set them in order every night they were left disarranged. Directly in the middle of the street stood the town's cross, over the low-browed entrance of a stone vault, furnished with seats also of stone. The formidable *jougs* depended from one of the abutments. A little higher up was the gaol, an antique ruinous structure with stone floors and a roof of ponderous grey slate. The manse, a mean-looking house of two low storeys, with very small windows, and bearing above the door the initials of the first Protestant minister of the parish, nearly fronted it ; while the only shop of the place was situated so much lower down, that, like the houses of the former town, it was carried away by the sea during a violent storm from the north-east. There

mingled with the other houses a due proportion of roofless tenements, with their red, weather-wasted gables, and melancholy-looking unframed windows and doors ; and, as trade decayed, even the more entire began to fall to pieces, and to show, like so many mouldering carcasses, their bare ribs through the thatch. Such was the old town of Cromarty in the year 1720.

Directly behind the site of the old town, the ground, as described in a previous chapter, rises abruptly from the level to the height of nearly a hundred feet, after which it forms a kind of tableland of considerable extent, and then sweeps gently to the top of the hill. A deep ravine, with a little stream running through it, intersects the rising ground at nearly right angles with the front it presents to the houses ; and on the eastern angle, towering over the ravine on the one side, and the edge of the bank on the other, stood the old castle of Cromarty. It was a massy, time-worn building, rising, in some places, to the height of six storeys, battlemented at the top, and roofed with grey stone. One immense turret jutted out from the corner which occupied the extreme point of the angle ; and looking down from an altitude of at least one hundred and sixty feet on the little stream, and the straggling row of trees which sprung up at its edge, commanded both sides of the declivity, and the town below. Other turrets of smaller size, but pierced like the larger one with rows of little circular apertures, which, in the earlier ages, had given egress to the formidable bolt, and in the more recent, when the cross-bow was thrown aside for the petronel, to the still

more formidable bullet, were placed by pairs on the several projections that stood out from the main body of the building, and were connected by hanging bartizans. There is a tradition that sometime in the seventeenth century a party of Highlanders, engaged in some predatory enterprize, approached so near the castle on this side, that their leader, when in the act of raising his arm to direct their march, was shot at from one of the turrets and killed, and that the party, wrapping up the body in their plaids, carried it away.

The front of the castle opened to the lawn, from which it was divided by a dry moat, nearly filled with rubbish, and a high wall indented with embrasures, and pierced by an arched gate way. Within was a small court, flagged with stone, and bounded on one of the sides by a projection from the main building, bartizaned and turreted like all the others, but only three storeys in height, and so completely fallen into decay that the roof and all the floors had disappeared. From the level of the court a flight of stone steps led to the vaults below ; another flight of greater breadth, and bordered on both sides by an antique balustrade, ascended to the entrance ; and the architect, aware of the importance of this part of the building, had so contrived it, that a full score of loop-holes in the several turrets and outjets which commanded the court, opened directly on the landing place. Round the entrance itself there jutted a broad, grotesquely proportioned moulding, somewhat resembling an old fashioned picture frame, and directly over it there was a square tablet of dark blue stone, bearing in high relief the arms of the old proprietors ; but the storms of at least five

centuries had defaced all the nicer strokes of the chisel, and the lady with her palm and dagger, the boars' heads, and the grey-hounds, were transformed into so many attenuated spectres of their former selves;—no unappropriate emblem of the altered fortunes of the house. The windows, small and narrow, and barred with iron, were thinly sprinkled over the front; and from the lintel of each there rose a triangular cap of stone, fretted at the edges, and terminating at the top in two knobs fashioned into the rude semblance of thistles. Initials and dates of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were inscribed in raised characters on these triangular tablets. The aspect of the whole pile was one of extreme antiquity. Flocks of crows and jays that had built their nests in the recesses of the huge tusked cornices which ran along the bartizans, wheeled ceaselessly around the gables and the turrets, awakening with their clamorous cries the echoes of the roof. The walls, grey and weather-stained, were tapestried in some places with sheets of ivy; and an ash sapling, which had struck its roots into the crevices of the outer wall, rose like a banner over the half dilapidated gateway.

The castle for several years before its demolition, was tenanted by only an old female domestic, and a little girl whom she had hired to sleep with her. I have been told by the latter, who, at the time I knew her, was turned of seventy, that two threshers could have plied their flails within the huge chimney of the kitchen; and that in the great hall, an immense dark chamber lined with oak, a party of a hundred men had exercised at the pike. The lower vaults she had

never the temerity to explore ; they were dark and gousty, she said, and the slits which opened into them were nearly filled up with long rank grass. Some of her stories of the castle associated well with the fantastic character of its architecture, and the ages of violence and superstition which had passed over it. A female domestic who had lived in it before the woman she was acquainted with, and who was foolhardy enough to sleep in it alone, was frightened one night out of her wits, and never again so far recovered them as to be able to tell for what. At times there would echo through the upper apartments a series of noises, as if a very weighty man was pacing the floors ; and “ O,” said my informant, “ if you could but have heard the shrieks and moans, and long whistlings, that would come sounding in the stormy evenings of winter, from the chimneys and the turrets. Often have I listened to them as I lay a-bed, with the clothes drawn over my face.” Her companion was sitting one day in a little chamber at the foot of the great stair, when hearing a tapping against the steps, she opened the door. The light was imperfect,—it was always twilight in the old castle, but she saw, she said, as distinctly as ever she saw any thing, a small white animal resembling a rabbit, rolling from step to step, head over heels, and dissolving, as it bounded over the last step, into a wreath of smoke. On another occasion, a person of Cromarty, when passing along the front of the building in a morning of summer, was horrified by the apparition of a very diminutive, grey headed, grey bearded old man, with a withered meagre face scarcely bigger than one’s fist, that seemed

seated at one of the windows. On returning by the same path about half an hour after, and just as the sun was rising out of the frith, he saw the same figure wringing its hands over a little cairn in a neighbouring thicket, but he had not courage enough to go up to it.

The scene of all these terrors has long since disappeared ; the plough and roller have passed over its foundations ; and, with the exception of a few imperfectly preserved traditions, all that it recorded of an ancient and interesting, though unfortunate family, with its silent, though impressive narratives of the unsettled lives, rude manners, uncouth tastes, and warlike habits of our ancestors, has also perished. It was pulled down by a proprietor of Cromarty, who had purchased the property a few years before ; and as he was engaged at the time in building a set of offices, and a wall to his orchard, the materials it furnished proved a saving to him of several pounds. He was a man of taste, too, as well as of prudence, and by smoothing down the eminence on which the building had stood, and then sowing it with grass, he bestowed upon it, for its former wild aspect, so workmanlike an appearance, that one might almost suppose he had made the whole of it himself. Two curious pieces of sculpture were, by some accident, preserved entire in the general wreck. In a vaulted passage which leads from the modern house to the road, there is a stone slab about five feet in length, and nearly two in breadth, which once served as a lintel to one of the two chimneys of the great hall. It bears, in low relief, the figures of hares and deer sorely beset by dogs, and

surrounded by a thicket of grapes and tendrils. The huntsman stands in the centre, attired in a sort of loose coat that reaches to his knees, with his horn in one hand, and his hunting spear in the other, and wearing the mustachios and peaked beard of the reign of Mary. The lintel of the second chimney, a still more interesting relic, is now in Kinbeakie cottage, parish of Resolis ; and a good lithographic print of it may be seen in the museum of the Northern Institution, Inverness ;—but of it more anon. All the other sculptures of the castle, including several rude pieces of Gothic statuary, were destroyed by the workmen. An old stone dial which had stood in front of the gate, was dug up by the writer, out of a corner of the lawn, about twelve years ago, and is now in his possession. When entire it indicated the hour in no fewer than nineteen different places, and though sorely mutilated and divested of all its gnomons, it is still entire enough to show that the mathematical ability of the artist must have been of no ordinary kind. It was probably cut under the inspection of Sir Thomas, who, among his other accomplishments, was a skilful geometrician.

“The old castle of Cromarty,” says the statistical account of the parish,” was pulled down in the year 1772. Several urns, composed of earthen ware, were dug out of the bank immediately around the building, with several coffins of stone. The urns were placed in square recesses formed of flags, and when touched by the labourers, instantly mouldered away, nor was it possible to get up one of them entire. They were filled with ashes mixed with fragments of half burned bones. The coffins contained human skeletons, some of

which wanted the head, while among the others which were entire, were some of a very uncommon size, measuring seven feet in length."

The old proprietors of the castle, among the other privileges derived to them as chiefs of a wide district of country, and the system of government which obtained during the ages in which they flourished, were hereditary Sheriffs of Cromarty, and vested with the power of pit and gallows. The highest knoll of the southern Sutor is still termed the Gallow-hill, from its having been a place of execution ; and a low cairn nearly hidden by a thicket of furze, which still occupies its summit, retains the name of the gallows. It is said that the person last sentenced to die at this place was a poor Highlander, who had insulted the sheriff, and that, when in the act of mounting the ladder, he was pardoned at the request of the Sheriff's lady. At a remoter period the usual scene of execution was a little eminence in the western part of the town, directly above the harbour, where there is a small circular hollow still known to the children of the place as the *Witch's Hole*; and in which, says tradition, a woman accused of witchcraft was burnt for her alleged crime sometime in the reign of Charles II. The Court-hill, an artificial mound of earth, on which, at least in the earlier ages, the cases of the sheriffdom were tried and decided, was situated several hundred yards nearer the old town. Some of the sentences passed at this place are said to have been flagrantly unjust. There is one Sheriff in particular, whom tradition describes as a cruel, oppressive man, alike regardless of the rights and lives

of his poor vassals ; and there are two brief anecdotes of him which still survive. A man named Macculloch, a tenant on the Cromarty estate (probably the same person introduced to the reader in the foregoing chapter) was deprived of a cow through the injustice of one of the laird's retainers, and going directly to the castle, disposed rather to be energetic than polite, he made his complaint more in the tone of one who had a right to demand, than in the usual style of submission. The laird, after hearing him patiently, called for the key of the dungeon, and, going out, beckoned on Macculloch to follow. He did so ; they descended a flight of stone steps together, and came to a massy oak door, which the laird opened ; when suddenly, and without uttering a syllable, he laid hold of his tenant with the intention of thrusting him in. But he had mistaken his man, the grasp was returned with one of more than equal firmness, and a struggle ensued, in which Macculloch, a bold, powerful Highlander, had so decidedly the advantage, that he forced the laird into his own dungeon, and then locking the door, carried away the key in his pocket.—The other anecdote is of a sterner cast : A poor vassal had been condemned on the Court-hill under circumstances more than usually unjust ; and the laird, after sentence had been executed on the eminence at the *Witch's Hole*, was returning homewards through the town, surrounded by his retainers, when he was accosted in a tone of prophecy, by an old man, one of the Hossacks of Cromarty ; who, though bed-ridden for years before, had crawled to a seat by the way side to wait his coming up. Tradition has preserved the words which follow as those in

which he concluded his prediction ; but they stand no less in need of a commentary than the obscurest prophecies of Merlin, or Thomas the Rhymer :—
“Laird, laird, what mayna skaith i’ the brock, maun skaith i’ the stock.” The seer is said to have meant that the injustice of the father would be visited on the children.

The recollection of these stories was curiously revived in Cromarty in the spring of 1829 ; when a labourer employed in digging a pit on the eminence above the harbour, and within a few yards of the *Witch’s Hole*, struck his mattock through a human skull, which immediately fell in pieces. A pair of shin bones lay directly below it, and on digging a little further there were found the remains of two several skeletons and a second skull. From the manner in which the bones were blended together, it seemed evident that the bodies had been thrown into the same hole, with their heads turned in opposite directions, either out of carelessness or in studied contempt. And they had, apparently, lain undisturbed in this place for centuries. A child by pressing its foot against the skull which had been raised entire, crushed it to pieces like the other ; and the whole of the bones had become so light and porous, that, when first seen by the writer, some of the smaller fragments were tumbling over the sward before a light breeze, like withered leaves, or pieces of fungous wood.

CHAPTER IX.

He was a veray parfit, gentil knight.

CHAUCER.

OF Sir Thomas Urquhart very little is known but what is related by himself, and though as much an egotist as most men, he has related but little of a kind available to the biographer. But there are characters of so original a cast that their more prominent features may be hit off by a few strokes ; and Sir Thomas's is decidedly of this class. It is impossible to mistake the small dark profile he has left us, small and dark though it be, for the profile of any mind except his own. He was born in 1613, the eldest son of Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty, and of Christian, daughter of Alexander Lord Elphinston. Of his earlier years there is not a single anecdote, nor is there any thing known of either the manner or place in which he pursued his studies. Prior to the death of his father, and, as he himself expresses it, "before his brains were yet ripened for eminent undertakings," he made the tour of Europe. In travelling through France, Spain, and Italy, he was repeatedly complimented on the fluency with which he spoke the languages of these countries, and advised by some of the people to pass himself for a native. But he was too true a patriot to relish the proposal. He had not less honour, he said, by his own poor country than could be de-

rived from any country whatever ; for, however much it might be surpassed in riches and fertility,—in honesty, valour, and learning it had no superior. And this assertion he maintained, at the sword's point, in single combat three several times, and at each time discomfited his antagonist. He boasts, on another occasion, that not in all the fights in which he had ever been engaged, did he yield an inch breadth to the enemy before the day of Worcester battle.

In the spring of 1641 he was knighted at Whitehall by Charles I., and his father dying soon after, he succeeded to the lands of Cromarty. Never was there a proprietor less in danger of sinking into the easy apathetical indolence of the mere country gentleman ; for, impressed with a belief that he was born to enlarge the limits of all science, he applied himself to the study of every branch of human learning, and, having *mastered what was already known*, and finding the *amount but little*, he seriously set himself to add to it. And first, as learning can be communicated only by the aid of languages, “ words being the signs of things,” he deemed it evident that, if language be imperfect, learning must of necessity be so likewise ; quite on the principle that a defect in the carved figure of a signet cannot fail of being transmitted to the image formed by it on the wax. The result of his enquiries on this subject differed only a very little from the conclusion which, when pursuing a similar course of study, the celebrated Lord Monboddo arrived at more than a hundred years after. His Lordship believed that all languages, except the Greek, are a sort of vulgar dialects which have grown up rather through accident than

design, and exhibit, in consequence, little else than a tissue of defects both in sound and sense. Greek, however, he deemed a perfect language; and he accounted for its superiority by supposing that, in some early age of the world, it had been constructed on philosophical principles, out of one of the old jargons, by a society of ingenious grammarians, who afterwards taught it to the common people. Sir Thomas went a little further; for, not excepting even the Greek, he condemned every language, ancient and modern, and set himself to achieve what, according to Monboddo, had been already achieved by the grammarians of Greece. And hence his ingenious but unfortunate work "The Universal Language."

"A tree," he thus reasoned, "is known by its leaves, a stone by its grit, a flower by the smell, meats by the taste, music by the ear, colours by the eye," and, in short, all the several natures of things by the qualities or aspects with which they address themselves to the senses or the intellect. And it is from these obvious traits of similarity or difference that the several classes are portioned by the associative faculty into the corresponding cells of the understanding. But it is not thus with words in any of the existing languages. Things the most opposite in nature are often represented by signs so similar that they can hardly be distinguished, and things of the same class by signs entirely different. Language is thus formed so loosely and unskilfully, that the associative faculty cannot be brought to bear on it;—one great cause why foreign languages are so difficult to learn, and when once learned, so readily forgotten. And there is a radical

defect in the alphabets of all languages, for in all, without exception, do the nominal number of letters fall far short of the real,—a single character being arbitrarily made to represent a variety of sounds. Hence it happens that the people of one country cannot acquaint themselves by books alone with the idiom of another. The words, too, proper to express without circumvolution all the multiform ideas of the human mind, are not to be found in any one tongue, and though the better languages have borrowed largely from each other to supply their several deficiencies, even the more perfect are still very incomplete. Hence the main difficulty of translation. Some languages are fluent without exactness. Hence an unprofitable wordiness, devoid of force and precision. Others, comparatively concise, are harsh and inharmonious. Hence, perhaps, the grand cause why some of the civilized nations (the Dutch for instance) though otherwise ingenious, make but few advances, compared with others, in philology and the *Belles Lettres*.

These, concluded Sir Thomas, are the great defects of language. In a perfect language, then, it is fundamentally necessary that there be classes of resembling words to represent the classes of resembling things,—that every idea have its sign, and every simple sound its alphabetical character. It is necessary, too, that there be a complete union of sweetness, energy, and precision. —Setting himself down in the old castle of Cromarty to labour on these principles, for the benefit of all mankind, and the glory of his country, he constructed his Universal Tongue. There is little difficulty, when we remember where he wrote, in tracing the origin of

his metaphor, when he says of the existing languages, that though they may be improved in structure "by the striking out of new lights and doors, the outjetting of kernels, and the erecting of prickets and barbicans," they are yet restricted to a certain base, beyond which they must not be enlarged. In his own language the base was fitted to the superstructure. His alphabet consisted of ten vowels, and twenty-five consonants. His radical classes of words amounted to two hundred and fifty, and, to use his own allegory, were the denizens of so many cities, divided into streets, which were again subdivided into lanes, the lanes into houses, the houses into storeys, and the storeys into apartments. It was impossible that the natives of one city should be confounded with those of another; and by prying into their component letters and syllables, the street, lane, house, storey, and apartment of every citizen, could be ascertained without a possibility of mistake. Simple ideas were expressed by monosyllables, and every added syllable expressed an added idea. So musical was this language, that for poetical composition it surpassed every other; so concise, that the weightiest thoughts could be expressed in it by a few syllables, in some instances by a single word; so precise, that even sounds and colours could be expressed by it in all their varieties of tone and shade; and so comprehensive, that there was no word in any language, either living or dead, that could not be translated into it, without suffering the slightest change of meaning. And with all its rich variety of phrase, so completely was it adapted to the associative faculty, that it was possible for a boy of ten years thoroughly

to master it in the short space of three months.—The entire work, consisting of a preface, grammar, and lexicon, was comprized in a manuscript of twelve hundred folio pages.

Laborious as this work must have proved, it was only one of a hundred great works completed by Sir Thomas before he had attained his thirty-eighth year, and in a style so exquisitely original, that neither in subject nor manner had he been anticipated in so much as one of them. He had designed, and in part digested, four hundred more. A complete list of these, with such a description of each as I have here attempted of his Universal Language, would be, perhaps, one of the greatest literary curiosities ever exhibited to the world; but so unfortunate was he, as an author, that the very names of the greater number of the works he finished have died with himself, while the names of his projected ones were, probably, never known to any one else. He prepared for the press a Treatise on Arithmetic intended to remedy some defects in the existing system. The invention of what he terms the “Trissotetral Trigonometry for the facilitating of calculations by representations of letters and syllables,” was the subject of a second treatise; and the proving of the Equipollencie and Opposition both of Plain and Modal Enunciations, by rules of Geometry (I use his own language, for I am not scholar enough to render it into common English) he achieved in a third. A fourth laid open the profounder recesses of the Metaphysics by a continued Geographical Allegory. In Blackwood’s Magazine for 1820, in a short critique on the *Jewel*, it is stated that

the writer had “good reasons to believe Sir Thomas to be the real author of that singular production, *A Century of Names, and Scantlings of Inventions*, the credit or discredit of which was dishonestly assumed by the Marquis of Worcester.” The reasons are not given ; but if intrinsic evidence be allowed to weigh any thing, either this little tract was written by Sir Thomas, or, what is much less probable, the world, nay, the same age and island, have produced two Sir Thomases. Some little weight, too, may be attached to the fact, that many of his manuscripts were lost in the city of Worcester, near which place, judging from his title, it is probable that the Marquis resided ; and that the “*Century of Names*” was not published until 1663, two years after death had disarmed poor Sir Thomas of his sword and his pen, and rendered him insensible to both his country’s honour and his own. If in reality the author of this piece, he must be regarded, it is said, as the prime inventor of the steam engine.

But the merit of the most curious of all his treatises no one has ventured to dispute with him,—a work entitled “*The True Pedigree and Lineal Descent of the Ancient and Honourable Family of Urquhart*.” It records the names of all the fathers of the family, from the days of Adam to those of Sir Thomas ; and may be regarded as forming no bad specimen of the inverted climax,—beginning with God, the creator of all things, and ending with the genealogist himself. One of his ancestors he has married (for he was a professed lover of the useful) to a daughter of what the Abbe Pluche deemed an Egyptian symbol of husbandry,

and another to a descendant of what Bacon regarded as a personification of human fortitude. In his notice of the arms of the family he has surpassed all the heralds who have flourished before or since. The first whose bearings he describes is Esormon, sovereign prince of Achaia, the father of all such as bear the name of Urquhart, and the fifth from Japhet by lineal descent. His arms were three banners, three ships, and three ladies in a field, *or*; the crest, a young lady holding in her right hand a brandished sword, and in her left a branch of myrtle; the supporters, two Javanites attired after the soldier habit of Achaia; and the motto *Ταυτα ἡ γη α ξιοδεα τα*, these three are worthy to behold. Heraldry and Greek were alike anticipated by the genius of this family. The device of Esormon was changed about six hundred years after, under the following very remarkable circumstances. Molin, a celebrated descendant of this prince, and a son-in-law of Deucalion and Pyrrha, accompanied Galethus, the Æneas of Scotland, to the scene of his first colony, a province of Africa, which, in that age, as in the present, was infested with wild beasts. He excelled in hunting; and having in one morning killed three lions, he carried home their heads in a large basket, and presented it to his wife Panthea, then pregnant with her first child. Unconscious of what the basket contained, she raised the lid, and, filled with horror and astonishment by the apparition of the heads, she struck her hand against her left side, exclaiming, in the suddenness of her surprise, "O Hercules! what is this." By a wonderful sympathy, the likeness of the three heads, grim and horrible as they appeared in the basket, was impressed on the left side

of the infant, who afterwards became a famous warrior, and transferred to his shield the badge which nature had thus bestowed upon him. The external ornaments of the bearings remained unaltered until the days of Astorimon, who, after his victory over Ethus, changed the myrtle branch of the lady for one of palm, and the original motto for Εὐνοεῖτω, εὐλογε, καὶ εὐπραττε, mean, speak, and do well. Both the shield and the supporters underwent yet another change in the reign of Solvations of Scotland, who, in admiration of an exploit achieved by the Urquhart and his two brothers, in the great Caledonian forest, converted the lions' heads into the heads of bears, and the armed Javanites of Esormon, into a brace of greyhounds. And such were the arms of the family in the days of Sir Thomas, as shewn by the curious stone lintel now at Kinbeakie.

This singular relie, which has, perhaps, more of character impressed upon it than any other piece of sandstone in the kingdom, is about five feet in length, by three in breadth, and bears date A. M. 5612, A. C. 1651. On the lower and upper edges it is bordered by a plain moulding, and at the ends by belts of rich foliage, terminating in a chalice or vase. In the upper corner two knights in complete armour, on horseback, and with their lances couched, front each other, as if in the tilt yard. Two Syrens playing on harps occupy the lower. In the centre are the arms,—the charge on the shield three bears' heads, the supporters two greyhounds, leashed and collared, the crest a naked woman holding a dagger and palm, the helmet that of a knight, with the beaver partially raised, and so profusely mantled that the drapery occupies more space than

the shield and supporters, and the motto MEANE WEIL, SPEAK WEIL, AND DOE WEIL. Sir Thomas's initials, S.T.V.C., are placed separately, one letter at the outer side of each supporter, one in the centre of the crest, and one beneath the label ; while the names of the more celebrated heroes of his genealogy, and the eras in which they flourished, occupy, in the following inscription, the space between the figures :—ANNO ASTORIMONIS, 2226. ANNO VOCOMPOTIS, 3892. ANNO MOLINI, 3199. ANNO RODRICI, 2958. ANNO CHARI, 2219. ANNO LUTORCI, 2000. ANNO ESORMONIS, 3804. It is melancholy enough that this singular exhibition of family pride should have been made in the same year in which the family received its death blow,—the year of Worcester battle.

During the eventful period which intervened between the death of Sir Thomas's father and this unfortunate year, he was too busily engaged with science and composition, to take an active part in the affairs of the kingdom. Nor does it appear that, at the commencement of the struggle between the Scottish Presbyterians and the King, he had any very strong inclination to side with either. He was no Presbyterian himself, and indeed not a man to contend earnestly about religion of any kind. He hints somewhat broadly in one of his treatises, that Tamerlane might possibly be in the right in supposing God to be best pleased with a diversity of worship. But though no Presbyterian, and lax in his religious opinions, he was a friend to civil liberty. He loved his country too well to be in the least desirous of seeing it sacrificed to the ambition of even a native prince ; and so

little friendly was he to despotism, as to class in one sentence, the doctrine "*de jure divino*" with "*piæ fraudes*" and "political whimsies," and to state, as his earnest wish in another, that a free school and standing library should be established in every parish of Scotland. But if he liked ill the tyranny and intolerance of Kings and Episcopalians, he liked the tyranny and intolerance of Presbyterian churchmen still worse. And there was a circumstance which rendered the Consistorial government much less tolerable to him than the Monarchical. The Monarchical recognised him as a petty feudal prince, vested with a prerogative not a whit less kingly in his own little sphere, than that which it challenged for itself; while the Consistorial pulled him down to nearly the level of his vassals, and legislated after the same fashion for both.

He found, too, that unfortunately for his peace, the churchmen were much nearer neighbours than the King. He was patron, and almost sole heritor of the churches of Cromarty, Kirk-Michael, and Cullicuden, and in desperate warfare did he involve himself with all the three ministers at once. Two of them were born vassals of the house; an ancestor of one of these "had shelter on the land, by reason of slaughter committed by him, when there was no refuge for him any where else in Scotland;" and the other owed his admission to his charge solely to the zeal of Sir Thomas, by whom he was inducted in opposition to the wishes of both the people and the clergy. And both ministers, prior to their appointment, had faithfully promised, as became good vassals, to remain satisfied with the salaries of their immediate predecessors. Their party

triumphed, however, and the promise was forgotten. In virtue of a decree of Synod, they sued for an augmentation of stipend ; Sir Thomas resisted ; and to such extremities did they urge matters against him, as to “outlaw and declare him rebel, by open proclamation, at the market cross of the head town of his own shire.” He joined issue with Mr. Gilbert Anderson, the minister of Cromarty, on a different question. The church, he regarded as exclusively his own property ; and the minister, who thought otherwise, having sanctioned one of his friends to erect a desk in it, Sir Thomas, who disliked the man, pulled it down. There was no second attempt made at placing it ; but for several sabbaths together, all the worst parts of Mr. Anderson’s sermons were devoted entirely to the benefit of the knight ; who was by much too fond of panegyric not to be affected by censure. Even when a prisoner in the tower, and virtually stripped of all his possessions, he continued to speak of the “acconital bitterness” of the preacher in a style that shews how keenly he must have felt it.

On the coronation of Charles II. at Scone, he quitted the old castle, to which he was never again to return, and joined the Scottish army ; carrying with him, among his other luggage, three huge trunks filled with his hundred manuscripts. He states that on this occasion he “was his own paymaster, and took orders from himself.” The army was heterogeneously composed of Presbyterians and Cavaliers ; men who had nothing in common but the cause which brought them together, and who, according to Sir Thomas, differed even in that. He has produced no fewer than four

comparisons, all good, and all very original, to prove that the obnoxious Presbyterians were rebels at heart. They make use of kings, says he, as we do of card kings in playing at the hundred, discard them without ceremony, if there be any chance of having a better game without them ;—they deal by them as the French do by their *Roy de la febre*, or king of the bean,—first honour them by drinking their health, and then make them pay the reckoning ; or as players at nine-pins do by the king kyle, set them up to have the pleasure of knocking them down again ;—or, finally, as the wassailers at Christmas serve their king of Misrule, invest them with their title for no other end than that they may countenance all the riots and disorders of the family. He accuses, too, some of the Presbyterian gentlemen, who had been commissioned to levy troops for the army, of the practices resorted to by the redoubtable Falstaff, when intrusted with a similar commission ; and of returning homewards when matters came to the push, out of an unwillingness to “ hazard their precious persons, lest they should seem to trust to the arm of flesh.” Poor Sir Thomas himself was not one of the people who in such circumstances are readiest at returning home. At any rate he staid long enough on the disastrous field of Worcester to be taken prisoner. Indifferent, however, to personal risk or suffering, he has detailed only the utter wo which befel his hundred manuscripts.

He had lodged, prior to the battle, in the house of a Mr. Spilsbury, “ a very honest sort of man, who had an exceeding good woman to his wife ;” and his effects, consisting of “ scarlet cloaks, buff suits, arms

of all sorts, and seven large portmantles full of precious commodity," were stored in an upper chamber. Three of the "portmantles," as has been said already, were filled with manuscripts in folio, "to the quantity of six score and eight quires and a half, divided into six hundred forty and two quinternions, the quinternion consisting of five sheets, and the quire of five and twenty." There were, besides, law papers and bonds to the value of about three thousand pounds sterling. After the total rout of the king's forces, the soldiers of Cromwell went about ransacking the houses; and two of them having broken into Mr. Spilsbury's house, and finding their way to the upper chamber, the scarlet cloaks, the buff suits, the seven "portmantles," and the hundred manuscripts fell a prey to their rapacity. The latter had wellnigh escaped, for at first the soldiers merely scattered them over the floor; but reflecting, after they had left the chamber, on the many uses to which they might be applied, they returned and bore them out to the street. Some they carried away with them, some they distributed among their comrades, and the people of the town gathered up the rest. One solitary quinternion, containing part of the preface to the Universal Language, found its way into the kennel, and was picked out two days after by a Mr. Broughton, a man of some learning, who restored it to Sir Thomas. His genealogy was rescued from the tobacco pipes of a file of musketeers, by an officer of Colonel Pride's regiment, and also restored. But the rest he never saw. He was committed to the Tower, with some of the other Scottish gentlemen taken at Worcester; and a body of English troops were garri-

soned in the old castle. So oppressive were their exactions, that though he had previously derived from his lands an income of nearly a thousand pounds per annum, (no inconsiderable sum in the days of the Commonwealth,) not a single shilling found its way to the Tower.

The ingenuity which had hitherto been taxed for the good of mankind and the glory of his country, had now to be exerted for himself. First he published his genealogy, to convince Cromwell and the Parliament that a family "which Saturn's scythe had not been able to mow in the progress of all former ages, ought not to be prematurely cut off." But neither Cromwell nor the Parliament took any notice of his genealogy. Next he published, in a larger work, entitled the *Jewel*, a prospectus of his Universal Language. Cromwell thought there were languages enough already. He described his own stupendous powers of mind. Cromwell was not in the least astonished at their magnitude. He hinted at the vast discoveries with which he was yet to enrich the country. Cromwell left him to employ them in enriching himself. In short, notwithstanding the much he offered in exchange for liberty and his forfeited possessions, Cromwell disliked the bargain; and so he remained a close prisoner in the Tower. It must be confessed, that with all his ingenuity, he was little skilled to conciliate the favour of the men in power. They had beheaded Charles I. and he yet tells them how much he hated the Presbyterians for the manner in which they had treated their unfortunate monarch; and though they would fain have dealt with Charles II. after the same

fashion, he assures them that in no virtue, moral or intellectual, was that prince inferior to any of his hundred and ten predecessors. Besides the *Genealogy* and the *Jewel*, he published, when in the Tower, a translation of the three first books of Rabelais, which has been described by a periodical critic as the "finest monument of his genius," and one of the most perfect transfusions of an author, from one language into another, that ever man accomplished." And it is remarked, with a reference to this work, by Mr. Motteux, that Sir Thomas "possessed learning and fancy equal to the task which he had undertaken, and that his version preserves the very style and air of the original." What is known of the rest of his history may be summed up in a few words. Having found means to escape out of prison he fled to the Continent, and there died on the eve of the Restoration, (indeed, as is said, out of joy at the event,) in his forty-eighth year.

"The character of Sir Thomas Urquhart," says a modern critic, "was singular in the extreme. To all the bravery of the soldier and learning of the scholar, he added much of the knight-errant, and more of the visionaire and projector. Zealous for the honour of his country, and fully determined to wage war, both with his pen and his sword, against all the defaulters who disgraced it—credulous, yet sagacious—enterprising but rash, he appears to have chosen the Admirable Crichton as his pattern and model for imitation. For his learning, he may be denominated the Sir Walter Raleigh of Scotland, and his pedantry was the natural fruit of erudition deeply

engrained in his mind. To this I may add, he possessed a disposition prone to strike out new paths in knowledge, and a confidence in himself that nothing could weaken or disturb. In short, the characters of the humourist, the bragadoccio, the schemer, the wit, the pedant, the patriot, the soldier, and the courtier, were all intermingled in his, and, together, formed a character which can hardly ever be equalled for excess of singularity, or excess of humour—for ingenious wisdom, or entertaining folly." He is described by another writer as "not only one of the most curious and whimsical, but one of the most powerful also, of all the geniuses our part of the island has produced."

He was unquestionably a very extraordinary man. There occur in some characters anomalies so striking, that, on their first appearance, they surprise even the most practised in the study of human nature. By a careful process of analysis, however, we may arrive, in most instances, at what may be regarded as the simple elements which compose them, and see the mystery explained. But it is not thus with the character of Sir Thomas. Anomaly seems to have formed its very basis, and the more we analyze, the more inexplicable it appears. It exhibits traits so opposite, and apparently so discordant, that the circumstance of their amazing contrariety renders him as decidedly an original as the Caliban of Shakspeare.

His inventive powers seem to have been of the first order. The new chemical vocabulary, with all its philosophical ingenuity, is constructed on principles exactly similar to those which he divulged more than

a hundred years prior to its invention, in the preface to his *Universal Language*. By what process could it be anticipated that the judgment which had enabled him to fix upon these principles, should have suffered him to urge in favour of that language the facility it afforded in the making of anagrams! As a scholar, he is perhaps not much overrated by the critic whose character of him I have just transcribed. It is remarked of the Greek language by Monboddo, that “were there nothing else to convince him of its being a work of philosophers and grammarians, its dual number would, of itself be sufficient; for, as certainly as the principles of body are the point, the line, and the surface, the principles of number are the monad and the duad,—though philosophers only are aware of the fact.” His Lordship, in even this—one of the most refined of his speculations—was anticipated by Sir Thomas. He, too, regarded the duad, “not as number, but as a step towards number—as a medium between multitude and unity;” and he has therefore assigned the dual its proper place in his *Universal Language*. And is it not strikingly anomalous, that, with all this learning, he should not only have failed to detect the silly fictions of the old chroniclers, but that he himself should have attempted to impose on the world with fictions equally extravagant! We find him, at one time, seriously pleading with the English Parliament that he had a claim, as the undoubted head and representative of the family of Japhet, to be released from the Tower. We see him at another producing solid and powerful arguments to prove that an union of the two kingdoms would be productive of

beneficial effects to both. When we look at his literary character in one of its phases, and see how unconsciously he lays himself open to ridicule, we wonder how a writer of such general ingenuity should be so totally devoid of that sense of the incongruous which constitutes the perception of wit. But, viewing him in another, we find that he is a person of exquisite humour, and the most successful of all the translators of Rabelais. We are struck in some of his narratives (his narrative of the death of Crichton, for instance) by a style of description so gorgeously imaginative, that it seems to partake in no slight degree of the grandeur and elevation of Epic poetry. We turn over a few of the pages in which these occur, and find some of the meanest things in the language. And his moral character seems to have been equally anomalous. He would sooner have died in prison than have concealed, by a single falsehood, the respect which he entertained for the exiled Prince, at the time he was fabricating a thousand for the honour of his family. Must we not regard him as a kind of intellectual monster—a sort of moral centaur! His character is wonderful, not in any of its single parts, but in its incongruity as a whole:—The horse is formed like other animals of the same species, and the man much like other men; but it is truly marvellous to find them united,

CHAPTER X.

Times

Whose echo rings through Scotland to this hour.

WORDSWORTH.

PRIOR to the Reformation there were no fewer than six chapels in the parish of Cromarty. The site of one of these, though it still retains the name of the Old Kirk, is now a sand-bank, the haunt of the crab and the sea-urchin, and is covered every larger tide by about ten feet of water; the plough has passed over the foundations of two of the others; of two more the only vestiges are a heap of loose stones, and a low grassy mound; and a few broken fragments of wall form the sole remains of the sixth and most entire. The very names of the first three have shared the fate of the buildings themselves; two of the others were dedicated to St. Duddock and St. Bennet; and two fine springs, on which even Time himself has been unable to effect any change, come bubbling out in the vicinity of the ruins, and bear the names of their respective saints. It is not yet twenty years since a thorn bush, which formed a little canopy over the spring of St. Bennet, would be covered anew every season with little pieces of rag, left on it as offerings to the saint, by sick people who came to drink of the water; and near the chapel itself, which

was perched like an eyrie, on a steep solitary ridge that overlooks the Moray Frith, there was a stone trough, famous, about eighty years before, for virtues derived also from the saint, like those of the well. For if a child was carried away by the fairies, and some mischievous unthriving imp left in its place, the parents had only to lay the changeling in this trough, and, by some invisible process, their child would be immediately restored to them. It was termed the fairies' cradle ; and was destroyed shortly before the Rebellion of 1745, by Mr. Gordon, the minister of the parish, and two of his elders. The last, and least dilapidated of the chapels, was dedicated to St. Regulus ; and there is a tradition, that at the Reformation a valuable historical record, which had belonged to it—the work probably of some literary monk or hermit, was carried away to France by the priest. I remember a very old woman, who used to relate, that when a little girl, she chanced, when playing one day among the ruins, with a boy a few years older than herself, to discover a small square recess in the wall, in which there was a book ; but that she had only time to remark that the volume was a very tattered one, and apparently very old, and that there were beautiful red letters in it, when the boy laying claim to it, forced it from her. What became of it afterwards she did not know, and unconscious of the interest which might have attached to it, never thought of making any enquiry.

There does not survive a single tradition of the circumstances, which, in this part of the country, accompanied the great event that consigned the six chapels

to solitude and decay. One may amuse oneself, however, in conceiving of the more interesting of these, and with history and a little knowledge of human nature for one's guide, run no great risk of conceiving amiss. The port of Cromarty was one of considerable trade for the age and country, and the people of the town were Lowland Scots. A more inquisitive race live nowhere. First, there would come to them wild vague reports, by means of the seamen and merchants, of the strange doctrines which had begun to disturb the continent, and the sister kingdom. Shreds of heretic sermons would be whispered over their ale ; and stories brought from abroad, of the impositions of the priests, would be eeked out, in some instances, with little corroborative anecdotes, the fruit of an experience acquired at home. For there were Whigs, even then, though under another name ;—a certain proportion of the people of Scotland being born such in every age of its independence. Then would come the story of the burning of good Patrick Hamilton, pensionary of the neighbouring abbey of Fearn ; and everybody would be exceedingly anxious to learn the particular nature of his crime. Statements of new doctrines, and objections urged against some of the old, would in consequence be eagerly listened to, and as eagerly repeated. Then there would come among them two or three serious, grave people, natives of the place, who would have acquired, when pursuing their occupations in the south, as merchants or mechanics, a knowledge, not merely speculative, of the new religion. A traveller of a different cast would describe with much glee to groups of the younger inhabitants,

the rare shows he had seen acted on the castle-hill of Cupar; and producing a black letter copy of "The Thrie Estaites" of Davy Lindsay, he would set all his auditors a-laughing at the expense of the Church. One of the graver individuals, though less openly, and to a more staid audience, would also produce a book, said to be done into plain English, out of a very old tongue, by one Tindal, and still more severe on the poor priests than even "The Thrie Estaites." They would learn from this book that what they were beginning to deem a rational, but at the same time new religion, was in reality the old one; and that Popery, with all its boasted antiquity, was by far the more modern of the two. In the meantime the priests of the chapels would be the angriest men in the parish; —denouncing against all and sundry the fire and fagots of this world, and the fire without fagots of the next; but one of them, a good honest man, neither the son of a churchman himself, nor yet burdened with a family of his own, would set himself, before excommunicating any one, to study the old, newly translated book, that he might be better able to cope with the maligners of his Church. Before half completing his studies, however, his discourses would begin to assume a very questionable aspect. Little would they contain regarding the Pope, and little concerning the saints; and more and more would he press upon his hearers the doctrines taught by the Apostles. Anon, however, he would assume a bolder style of language; and sometimes conclude, after saying a great deal about the spiritual Babylon, and the man of sin, by praying for godly John Knox, and all

the other ministers of the Evangel. In short, the honest priest would prove the rankest heretic in the whole parish. And thus would matters go on from bad to worse. A few grey heads would be shaken at the general defection ; but these would be gradually dropping away ; and the young themselves would be growing old without changing their newly-acquired opinions. They would not all be good Christians ;—for every one should know that it is quite a possible thing to be a Protestant, sound enough for all the purposes of party, without being a Christian at all ;—but they would almost all be reformers ; and when the state would at length set itself to annihilate root and branch of the old establishment, and to build up a new one on the broad basis of the kingdom, not a parish in the whole of it would enter more cordially into the scheme than the parish of Cromarty.

But however readily the people might have closed with the doctrines of the Reformation, they continued to retain a good deal of the spirit of the old religion. Having made choice of a piece of land on the edge of the ridge which rises behind the houses, as a proper site for their church, they began to collect the materials. It so chanced, however, that the first few stones gathered for the purpose, being thrown down too near the edge of the declivity, rolled to the bottom ; the circumstance was deemed admonitory ; and the church, after due deliberation, was built at the base instead of the top of the ridge, on exactly the spot where the stones had rested. The first protestant minister of the parish was a Mr. Robert Williamson. His name occurs oftener than once in Calderwood's

Church History ; and his initials, with those of his wife, are still to be seen on a flat triangular stone in the eastern part of the town, which bears date 1593. It is stated by Calderwood, that “ Jesuits having libertie to passe thorough the countrey in 1583, during the time of the Earle of Huntlie’s lieutenantrie, great coldness of religion entered in Ross ;” and by an act of council passed five years after, this Robert Williamson, and “ John Urquhart, tutor of Cromartie,” were among the number empowered to urge matters to an extremity against them.

There awaited Scotland a series of no light evils in the short-sighted policy which attempted to force upon her a religion she abhorred. The surplice and the service-book were introduced into her churches ; and the people, who would scarcely have bestirred themselves had merely their civil rights been invaded, began to dread that they could not, without being unhappy in more than the present world, conform to the religion of the state. And so they set themselves seriously to enquire whether the power of kings is not restricted to the present world only. They learned, in consequence, that not merely is such the case, but that it has yet other limitations ; and the more they sought to determine these, the more questionable did its grounds become. The spirit manifested on this occasion by the people of this part of the country, is happily exemplified by Spalding’s narrative of a riot which took place at the Chanonry of Ross, in the spring of 1638. The service-book had been quietly established by the bishop two years before ; but the more thoroughly the people grew acquainted with it, the

more unpopular it became. At length, on the second Sunday of March, just as the first bell had rung for sermon, but before the ringing of the second, a numerous party of schoolboys broke into the cathedral, and stripped it in a twinkling of all the service-books. Out they rushed in triumph, and, procuring a lighted coal and some brushwood, they marched off in a body to the low sandy promontory beneath the town, to make a bonfire of the whole set. But a sudden shower extinguishing the coal, instead of burning they tore the books into shreds, and flung the fragments into the sea. The bishop went on with his sermon; but it was more than usually brief; and such were the feelings exhibited at its close by the people, that, taking hastily to his horse, he quitted the kingdom. "A very busy man was he esteemed," says the annalist, "in the bringing in of the service-book, and therefore durst he not, for fear of his life, return again to Scotland." In short, the country was fully awakened; and before the close of the following month, the National Covenant was subscribed in the shires of Ross, Cromarty, and Nairn.

Some of the minor events which took place in the sheriffdom of Cromarty, on the triumph of Presbyterianism, have been detailed, as recorded by Sir Thomas, in the foregoing chapter. Even on his own testimony, most men of the present day will not feel disposed to censure very severely the churchmen of his district. It must be confessed, however, that the principles of liberty, either civil or ecclesiastical, were but little understood in Scotland in the middle of the seventeenth century;—the parties which divided it deem-

ing themselves too exclusively in the right to learn from the persecutions to which they were in turn subjected, that the good old rule of doing as we would be done by, should influence the conduct of politicians as certainly as that of private men. And there is a simple fact which ought to convince us, however zealous for the honour of our church, that the Presbyterian synod of Ross, which Sir Thomas has termed "a promiscuous knot of unjust men," was by no means a very exemplary body. Five-sixths of its members conformed at the Restoration, and became curates; and as they were notoriously intolerant as Episcopalians, it is not at all probable that they should have been strongly characterized by liberality during the previous period, when they had found it their interest to be Presbyterians.

The restoration of Charles, and the appointment of Middleton as his commissioner for Scotland, were followed by the fatal act which overturned Presbyterianism, and set up Episcopacy in its place. It is stated by Wodrow, that Middleton, previous to the bringing in of this act, had been strengthened in the resolution which led to it by Mackenzie of Tarbat, and Urquhart of Cromarty; and that the latter, who had lately "counterfeited the Protestor," ended miserably some time after. In what manner he ended, however, is not stated by the historian, but tradition is more explicit. On the death of Sir Thomas, he was succeeded by his brother Alexander, who survived him only a year, and dying without male issue, the estate passed to Sir John Urquhart of Craigfintrie, the head of a branch of the family which had sprung from the main

stock about a century before. This Sir John was the friend and counsellor of Middleton. About eleven years after the passing of the act he fell into a deep melancholy, and destroyed himself with his own sword in one of the apartments of the old castle. The sword, it is said, was flung into a neighbouring draw-well by one of the domestics, and the stain left by his blood on the walls and floor of the apartment, was distinctly visible at the time the building was pulled down.

So well was the deprecated act received by the time-serving Synod of Ross, that they urged it into effect against one of their own body, more than a year before the ejection of the other non-conforming clergymen. In a meeting of the Synod which took place in 1661, the person chosen as moderator was one Murdoch Mackenzie ;—a man so strong in his attachments, that he had previously sworn to the National Covenant no fewer than fourteen times, and he had now fallen as desperately in love with the Bishoprick of Moray. One of his brethren, however, an unmanageable, dangerous person, for he was uncompromisingly honest, and possessed of very considerable talent, stood directly in the way of his preferment. This member, the celebrated Mr. Hogg of Kiltearn, had not sworn to the Covenant half so often as his superior, the Moderator, but then so wrong-headed was he as to regard his few oaths as binding ; and he could not bring himself to like Prelacy any the better for its being espoused by the king. And so his expulsion was evidently a matter of necessity. The Moderator had nothing to urge against his practice ; for no one could excel him in the art of living well ; but his

opinions lay more within his reach ; and no sooner had the synod met, than, singling him out, he demanded what his thoughts were of the Protestors—the party of Presbyterians who, about ten years before, had not taken part with the king against the Republicans. Mr. Hogg declined to answer ; and on being removed, that the synod might deliberate, the Moderator rose and addressed them. Their brother of Kiltearn, he said, was certainly a great man—a very great man, but as certainly were the Protestors opposed to the king ; and if any member of Synod took part with them, whatever his character, it was evidently the duty of the other members to have him expelled. Mr. Hogg was then called in, and having refused, as was anticipated, judiciously to disown the Protestors, sentence of deposition was passed against him. But the consciences of the men who thus dealt with him, betrayed in a very remarkable manner their real estimate of his conduct. It is stated by Wodrow, on the authority of an eye-witness, that sentence was passed with a peculiar air of veneration, as if they were ordaining him to some higher office ; and that the Moderator was so deprived of his self-possession as to remind him, in a consolatory speech, that “ our Lord Jesus Christ had suffered great wrong from the Scribes and Pharisees.”

Mackenzie received the reward of his zeal shortly after in an appointment to the Bishoprick of Moray ; and one Paterson, a man of similar character, was ordained Bishop of Ross. On the order of council, issued in the autumn of 1662, for all ministers of parishes to attend the diocesan meetings, and take the

newly-framed oaths, and while in some of the southern districts of the kingdom only a few ministers attended, in the diocese of Ross there were but four absent, exclusive of Mr. Hogg. These four were, Mr. Hugh Anderson of Cromarty, Mr. John Mackilligen of Alness, Mr. Andrew Ross of Tain, and a Mr. Thomas Ross, whose parish is not named in the list. And they were all in consequence ejected from their charges in the winter following. Mr. Anderson, a nephew of Sir Thomas's opponent, Mr. Gilbert, who was now dead, retired to Moray, accompanied by his *bedral*, who had resolved on sharing the fortunes of his pastor; and they returned together a few years after to a small estate, the property of Mr. Anderson, situated in the western extremity of the parish. Mr. Mackilligen remained at Alness, despite of the council and the bishops, who had enacted that no non-conforming minister should take up his abode within twenty miles of his former church. Mr. Ross of Tain resided within the bounds of the same Presbytery; and Mr. Fraser of Brea, a young gentleman of Cromartyshire, who was ordained to the ministry about ten years after the expulsion of the others, had his seat in the parish of Resolis. In short, as remarked by Wodrow, there was more genuine Presbyterianism to be found on the shores of the Bay of Cromarty, notwithstanding the general defection, than in any other part of the kingdom north of the Tay.

And the current of popular feeling seems to have set in strongly in its favour about the year 1666. Towards the close of this year, Paterson the bishop, in a letter to his son, describes the temper of the country

about him as very cloudy ; and complains of a change in the sentiments of many who had previously professed an attachment to Prelacy. Mr. Mackilligen, a faithful and active preacher of the forbidden doctrines, seems to have given him so much trouble, that he even threatened to excommunicate him, but the minister regarding his threat in the proper light, replied to it by comparing him to Balaam the wicked prophet who went forth to curse Israel, and to Shimei the son of Gera, who cursed David. The joke spread, for as such was it regarded, and Paterson, who had only the sanctity of his office to oppose to the personal sanctity of his opponent, deemed it prudent to urge the threat no further:—He had the mortification of being laughed at for having urged it so far. There is a little hollow among the hills, about three miles from the house of Fowlis, and not much farther from Alness, in the gorge of which the eye commands a wide prospect of the lower lands, and the whole Frith of Cromarty. It lies, too, on the extreme edge of the cultivated part of the country, for beyond there stretches only a brown uninhabited desert ; and in this hollow the neighbouring Presbyterians used to meet for the purpose of religious worship. On some occasions they were even bold enough to assemble in the villages. In the summer of 1675, Mr. Mackilligen, assisted by his brethren of Tain and Cromarty, and the Laird of Brea, celebrated the Communion at Obsdale, in the house of the Lady Dowager of Fowlis. There was an immense concourse of people ; and “ so plentiful was the effusion of the Spirit,” says the historian whom I have so often had occasion to quote, “ that the oldest Christ-

ians present never witnessed the like." Indisputably, even from natural causes, the time must have been one of much excitement ; and who, that believes the Bible, will dare affirm that God cannot comfort his people by extraordinary manifestations, when deprived of the common comforts of earth for their adherence to him ? One poor man, who had gone to Obsdale merely out of curiosity, was so affected by what he heard, that when some of his neighbours blamed him for his temerity, and told him that the bishop would punish him for it by taking away his horse and cow, he assured them that in such a cause he was content to lose not merely all his worldly goods but his head also. A party had been dispatched at the instance of the bishop, to take Mackilligen prisoner ; but, misinformed regarding the place where the meeting held, they proceeded to his house at Alness, and spent so much time in pillaging his garden, that before they reached Obsdale he had got out of their way. But he fell into the hands of his enemy, the bishop, in the following year, and during his long imprisonment on the Bass, for to such was he sentenced, he contracted a disease of which he died. Mr. Ross of Tain, and Mr. Fraser of Brea, were apprehended shortly after, and disposed of in the same manner.

Nor was it only a few clergymen that suffered in this part of the country for their adherence to the church. Among the names of the individuals who, in the shires of Ross and Cromarty, were subjected to the iniquitous fine imposed by Middleton on the more rigid Presbyterians, I find the name of Sir Robert Munro of Fowlis, the head of a family which

ranks among the most ancient and honourable in the kingdom. Sir John Munro, son of Sir Robert, succeeded to the barony in 1668. His virtues, and the persecutions to which he was subjected, are recorded by the pen of Doddridge:—"The eminent piety of this excellent person exposed him," says this writer, "to great sufferings in the cause of religion in those unhappy and infamous days, when the best friends to their country were treated as the worst friends to the government. His person was doomed to long imprisonment for no pretended cause but what was found against him in the matters of his God; and his estate, which was before considerable, was harassed by severe fines and confiscations, which reduced it to a diminution much more honourable, indeed, than any augmentation could have been, but from which it has not recovered to this day."

But, perhaps, a brief narrative of the sufferings of a single individual may make a stronger impression on the reader than any general detail of those of the party. Mr. James Fraser of Brea was born in the western part of the shire of Cromarty, in the year 1639. On the death of his father, whom he lost while in his infancy, he succeeded to the little property of about £100 per annum, whose name, according to the fashion of Scotland, is attached to his own. His childhood was passed much like the childhood of most other people; but with this difference, that those little attempts at crime which serve to identify the moral nature of children with the moral nature of men, and which, in our riper years, are commonly either forgotten altogether or regarded with an in-

terest which owes nought of its intensity to remorse, were considered by him as the acts of a creature accountable to the Great Judge for even its earliest derelictions from virtue. But this trait belongs properly to his subsequent character. In his seventeenth year, after a youth spent unhappily, in a series of conflicts with himself, for he was embued with a love of forbidden pleasures, and possessed of a conscience exquisitely tender, a change came over him, and he became one of the excellent few who live less for the present world than for the future. As he was not wedded by the prejudices of education to any set of religious opinions, he had, with only the Scriptures for his guide, to frame a creed for himself ; and having come in contact, in Edinburgh, with some Quakers, he was wellnigh induced to join with them. But on more serious consideration, he found that some of their tenets were not quite in unison with those of the Bible. He attended, for some time after the Restoration, the preaching of the curates ; but profiting little by their doctrines, he deliberated whether he did right in hearing them, and concluded in the negative, in the very year when all such conclusions were declared treason by act of Parliament. In short, by dint of reasoning and reading, he landed full in Presbyterianism, at a time when there was nothing to be gained by it, and a great deal to be lost. And not merely did he embrace it for himself, but deeming it the cause of God, he came forward in this season of wrong and suffering, when the bad opposed it, and the timid shrunk from it, to preach it to the people. He believed himself called to the ministerial office in a

peculiar manner, by the Great Being who had fitted him for it ; and the simple fact that he did not, in Scotland at least, gain a single sixpence by all his preaching, until after the Revolution, ought surely to convince the most sceptical that he did not mistake on this occasion the suggestions of interest for those of duty. He began to preach the forbidden doctrines in the year 1672 ; and he was married shortly after to a lady to whom he had been long attached.

The sufferings to which he had been subjected prior to his marriage affected only himself. He had been fined and exposed to ridicule ; and he had had to submit to loss and imposition, out of a despair of finding redress from corrupt judges, whose decisions would have been prompted rather by the feelings with which they regarded his principles than by any consideration of the merits of his cause. No sooner, however, had he married, and become a preacher, than he was visited by evils greater in themselves, and which he felt all the more deeply from the circumstance that their effects were no longer confined to himself. He was summoned before councils for preaching without authority, and in the fields, and denounced and outlawed for not daring to appear. But he persevered, notwithstanding, wandering under hiding from place to place, and preaching twice or thrice every week to all such as had courage enough to hear him. He was among the number intercommuned by public writ ; all the people of Scotland, even his own friends and relatives, being charged, under the severest penalties, not to speak to him, or receive him into their houses, or minister even the slightest comfort

to his person. And yet still did he persevere on the strength of the argument urged by St. Peter before the Jewish Sanhedrim. The lady he married was a person every way worthy of such a husband. "In her," I use his own simple and expressive language, "did I behold as in a glass the Lord's love to me ; and so effectually did she sweeten the sorrows of my pilgrimage, that I have often been too nearly led to exclaim, It is good for me to be here !" But she was lent him only for a short season. Four years after his marriage, when under hiding, word was brought him that she lay sick of a fever, and hurrying home in "great horror and darkness of mind," he reached her bed-side only to find that she had departed, and that he was left alone.

His sorrow at the bereavement oppressed, but it could not overwhelm him ; for, with an energy rendered more intense by a sense of desolateness, and a feeling that the world had become as nothing to him, he applied afresh to what he deemed his bounden duty, the preaching of the word. He was diligent in ministering to the comfort of many who were less afflicted than himself ; and enveloped in the very flames of persecution, he confirmed, by his exhortations, such as were shrinking from their approach. So well was his character understood by the prelates, that he was one of three expressly named in an act of council, as peculiarly obnoxious, and a large sum of money was offered to any who would apprehend him. Great rewards, too, were promised on the same account by the archbishop of St. Andrews, out of his private purse ; and after a series of hair-breadth

escapes, he at length fell into his hands, through the treachery of a servant. The questions put to him on his trial, with his replies to them, are given at full length by Wodrow. Without in the least compromising his principles, he yet availed himself of every legal argument which the circumstances of his case admitted ; and such was the ingenuity of his defence, that he was repeatedly complimented on the score of ability by the noblemen on the bench. He was charged, however, with a breach of good manners ; for, while he addressed his other judges with due respect, he replied to the accusations of the archbishop, as if they had been urged against him by merely a private individual. In answer to the charge, he confessed that he was but a rude man, and hinted, with some humour, that he had surely been brought before their lordships for some other purpose than to make proof of his breeding. And, after all, there was little courtesy lost between himself and the archbishop. He had been apprehended near midnight, and before sunrise next morning, the servant of the latter was seen standing at the prison gate, instructing the jailor that the prisoner should be confined apart, and none suffered to have access to him. When the court met, the archbishop strove to entrap him, with an eagerness which only served to defeat its object, into an avowal of the sentiments with which he regarded the king and his ministers ; and failing to elicit these, for the preacher was shrewd and sagacious, he represented him to the other members of council, as a person singularly odious and criminal, and an enemy to every principle of civil government. He was a schismatic

too, he affirmed,—a render asunder of the Church of Christ ! To the charge that he was a preacher of sedition, Mr. Fraser replied with apostolic fervour, that in “ none of his discourses had he urged aught disloyal or traitorous ; but that as the Spirit enabled him, had he preached repentance towards God, and faith towards Jesus Christ, and no other thing but what was contained in the Prophets and the New Testament. And so far,” he added, “ was he from being terrified or ashamed to own himself a minister of Christ, that although of no despicable extraction, yet did he glory most to serve God in the gospel of his Son, and deem it the greatest honour to which he had ever attained.” After trial he was remanded to prison, and awakened next morning by the jailor, for he had slept soundly, that he might prepare for a journey to the Bass. He was escorted by the way by a party of twelve horsemen and thirty foot, and was delivered up on landing in the island to the custody of the governor.

Here a new series of sufferings awaited him, not perhaps so harassing in themselves as those to which he had recently been subjected,—for punishment in such cases is often less severe than the train of persecution which leads to it ; but he felt them the more deeply, because he could no longer, from his situation, exert that energy of mind which had enabled him to divest, on former occasions, an evil of more than half its strength, by meeting it, as it were, more than half way. He had now to wait in passive expectation until the evil came. There were a number of other

prisoners confined to the Bass, for their attachment to Presbyterianism ; and the governor, a little-minded, capricious man, who loved to display the extent of his authority, by shewing how many he could render unhappy, would sometimes deny them all intercourse with each other, by closely confining them to their separate cells. At times, too, when permitted to associate together, some of the profaner officers would break in upon them, and annoy them with the fashionable wit and blasphemy of the period. A dissolute woman was appointed to wait upon them, and scandalous stories circulated at their expense ; all the letters brought them from the land were broken open and made sport of by the garrison ; they were neither allowed to eat nor worship together ; and though their provisions and water were generally of the worst kind, they had sometimes to purchase them,—even the latter, at an exorbitant price. But there were times at which the preacher could escape from all his petty vexations. In the higher part of the island there are ranges of solitary walks, which skirt the edge of the precipices, and command an extensive view of the neighbouring headlands and the ocean. On these, when his jailors were in their more tolerant moods, would he be permitted to saunter for whole hours ; indulging, as the waves were breaking many hundred feet beneath him, and the sea-fowls screaming over him, in a not unpleasing melancholy,—musing much on the future, with all its doubtful probabilities, or “ looking back on the days of old, when he joyed with the wife of his youth.” And there was a considerable

part of his time spent more profitably in the study of Greek and Hebrew. He besides read divinity, and wrote a treatise on faith, with several other miscellanies :—and, at length, after an imprisonment of two years and a half, during which period his old enemy the archbishop had suffered the punishment which there was no law to inflict on him, he was set at liberty ; and he quitted his prison with not less zeal, and with more learning than he had brought into it.

He still deemed preaching as much his duty as before, and the state regarded it as decidedly a crime ; and so he had to resume his wandering, unsettled life of peril and hardship ; “ labouring to be of some use to every family he visited.” Falling sick of an ague, contracted through his mode of living, he was cited before the council, at the instance of some of his old friends the bishops ; who, reckoning on his inability to appear on the day named, took this way of having him outlawed a second time. But they had miscalculated ; for no sooner had he received the citation, than dragging himself from his bed, he set out on his journey to Edinburgh. Legal oppression he respected as little as he had done six years before ; but he was now differently circumstanced,—one of his friends, on his liberation from the Bass, having bound himself as his surety ; and sooner would he have died by the way than have subjected him to any loss. When the day arrived, he presented himself at the bar of the council ; and defended himself with such ability and spirit, that his lay judges were on the eve of acquitting him. Not so the bishops ; and the matter, after some debate, being wholly referred to their judgment, he was

sentenced to be imprisoned at Blackness, until he had paid a fine of five thousand merks, and given security that he should not again preach in Scotland. To Blackness he was accordingly sent ; and there he remained in close confinement, and subjected, as he had been at the Bass, to the caprice of a tyrannical governor, for about seven weeks ; when he was set at liberty, on condition that he should immediately quit the kingdom. He passed therefore into England ; and he soon found, for the Christian is a genuine cosmopolite, “ that a good Englishman was more truly his countryman than a wicked Scot.” He was much esteemed by English people of his own persuasion ; and though he had at first resolved to forbear preaching, out of the dread of being reckoned a “ barbarian,” for he could not divest himself of his Scotticisms, he yielded to the solicitations of his newly-acquired friends ; and he soon attained among them, as he had done at home, the character of being a powerful and useful preacher. But bonds and imprisonment awaited him even here. On the execution of Russell and Sydney, he was arrested on the suspicion of being one of their confederates ; and on refusing to take what was termed the Oxford Oath, he was committed to Newgate, where he was kept for six months. But from his previous experience of the prisons of Scotland, he seems, with Goldsmith’s sailor, to have deemed Newgate a much better sort of place than it is usually esteemed ;—his apartment was large and lightsome, and the jailors were all very kind. Resuming, on his release, his old mode of living, he continued to preach and study by turns, until the Revolution ; when, re-

turning to Scotland, he was invited by the people of Culross to preside over them as their pastor ;—a fit pastor for a parish which, during the reign of Prelacy, had suffered and resisted more than almost any other in the kingdom. In this place he continued until his death ; grateful for all the mercies bestowed upon him, and few men could reckon them better ; but peculiarly grateful that in a season of hot persecution he had been enabled to take part with God.

Nor were strong-minded men, like Fraser of Brea, the only persons who espoused this cause in the day of trouble, and dared to suffer for it. There is a quiet passive fortitude in the better kind of women, which lies concealed, as it ought, under a cover of real gentleness and seeming timidity, until called forth by some occasion which renders it a duty to resist ; and this excellent spirit was exhibited during this period by at least one lady of Cromarty. She was a Mrs. Gordon, the wife of the parish minister ;—a lady who, at an extreme old age, retained much of the beauty of youth,—a smooth unwrinkled forehead, shaded by a profusion of black glossy hair, without the slightest tinge of grey : And it was said of her, so exquisite was her complexion, that, when drinking a glass of wine, her neck and throat would assume the ruddy hue of the liquid ; an imaginary circumstance, deemed characteristic at one time, by the common people of Scotland, of the higher order of beauties, and which is happily introduced by Allan Cunningham into one of the most pleasing of his ballads.

“ Fu’ white white was her bonny neck,
Twist wi’ the satin twine ;

But ruddie ruddie grew her hawse,
While she sipp'd the bluid red wine."

Mrs. Gordon could scarcely have attained her eighteenth year at the Revolution ; and yet she had been exposed to suffering on the score of religion, in the previous troubles. There was a story among the people, that her ears had been cut off ; it was even observed, that her tresses were always so arranged as to conceal the supposed mutilation ; and some of the wilder spirits of the place used to call her *Luggie*, in allusion to the story ; but she was too highly respected for the name to take. When a very old woman, she was one day combing her hair in the presence of a little girl, who was employed in dressing up the apartment in which she sat, and who threw at her from time to time a very inquisitive glance. "Come here, Maggie," said the lady, who guessed the cause of her solicitude, "you are a curious little girl, and have heard that I have lost my ears,—have you not ? Here they are, however," she continued, shading back her hair as she spoke, and displaying two very pretty ones, "wicked men once threatened to cut them off, and a knife was whet for the purpose, but God permitted them not."

CHAPTER XI.

A mighty good sort of man.

BONNEL THORNTON.

THE Episcopalian minister of Cromarty was a Mr. Bernard Mackenzie, a quiet, timid sort of man, with little force of character, but, with what served his turn equally well, a good deal of cunning. He came to the parish in the full expectation of being torn to pieces, and with an aspect so wo-begone and miserable, for his very countenance told how unambitious he was of being a martyr, that the people pitied instead of insulting him. And in the course of a few weeks he had not an ill wisher among them, however disaffected some of them were to his church. No one could be more conversant than the curate with the policy of submission ; or could become all things to all men with happier effect. The people, who like the great bulk of the people every where, were better acquainted with the duties of ministers than with their own, were liberal in giving advices, and no person could be more submissive in listening to these than the curate. Some of them, too, had found out the knack of being religious without being moral, and the curate was by much too polite to hint to them that the knack was a bad one. And thus he went on, suiting himself to every event, and borrowing the tone

of his character from those whom it was his duty rather to lead than to follow, until the great event of the Revolution, which he also surmounted by taking the oath of allegiance that recognised William as king both in fact and in law. With all his policy, however, he could not help dying a few years after ; when he was succeeded by the old ejected minister, Mr. Hugh Anderson.

The curate of the neighbouring parish of Nigg,—a Mr. James Mackenzie, was in some respects a different sort of person. He was nearly as quiet and submissive as his namesake of Cromarty, and he was not much more religious ; for when one Sunday morning he chanced to meet the girls of a fishing village returning home laden with shell-fish, he only told them that they should strive to divide the day so as to avail themselves both of the church and the ebb. He was, however, a simple benevolent sort of man who had no harm in him, and who never suspected it in others ; and so little was he given to notice what was passing around him, as to be ignorant even of the exact number of his children, though it was known to every one else in the parish that they amounted to twenty. They were all sent out to nurse, as was customary at the period, and when the usual term had expired, and they were returned to the manse, it proved a sad puzzle to the poor curate to recollect their names. On one occasion when the whole twenty had gathered round his table, there was a little, red-checked girl among them, who having succeeded in climbing to his knee, delighted him so much with her prattle, that after almost smothering her with kisses, he told her that

“gin she were a bairn o’ his, he would gie her a tocher o’ three hunder merk mair nor any o’ the lave.” “Then haud ye gudeman,” said his wife, “for as sure as ye’re sitting there, it’s ye’re ain Jenny.” The descendants of the curate, as might be anticipated from the number of his children, are widely spread over the country, and exhibit almost every variety of fortune, and cast of mind. One of them, a poor pauper, died a few years ago in the last extreme of destitution and wretchedness ;—another, an eminent Scottish lawyer, now presides on the Bench. One of his elder sons was grandfather to the celebrated Henry Mackenzie of Edinburgh, and the great-great-grandchild of the little prattling Jenny is the writer of these chapters.

The bulk of the people of Nigg had just as little religion as their pastor. Every Sunday forenoon they attended church, but the evening of the day was devoted to the common athletic games of the country. A robust active young fellow, named Donald Roy, was deemed their best club-player ; and, as the game was a popular one, his Sabbath evenings were usually spent at the club. He was a farmer and the owner of a small herd of black cattle. On returning home one Sabbath evening, after vanquishing the most skilful of his competitors, he found the carcass of one of his best cattle lying across the threshold, where she had dropped down a few minutes before. Next Sabbath he headed the club-players as usual, and on returning at the same hour, he found the dead body of a second cow lying in exactly the same place. “Can it be possible,” thought he, “that the Whigs are in

the right after all !” A challenge, however, had been given to the club-players of a neighbouring parish, and as the game was to be played out on the following Sabbath, he could not bring himself to resolve the question. When the day came, Donald played beyond all praise, and, elated by the victory which his exertions had at length secured to his parish, he was striding homewards through a green lane, when a fine cow which he had purchased only a few days before, came pressing through the fence, and flinging herself down before him, expired at his feet with a deep horrible bellow. “This is God’s judgment,” exclaimed Donald, “the Whigamores are in the right ;—I have taken *his* day, and he takes *my* cattle.” He never after played at the club ; and, such was the change effected on his character, that at the Revolution he was ordained an elder of the church, and he became afterwards one of the most notable worthies of the north. There are several stories still extant regarding him, which show that he must have latterly belonged to that extraordinary class of men (now extinct) who, living as it were on the extreme verge of the natural world, and seeing far into the world of spirits, had in their times of darkness to do battle with the worst inmates of the latter, and saw in their seasons of light the extreme bounds of the distant and the future. This class comprised at one time some of the staunchest champions of the Covenant, and we find at its head the celebrated Donald Cargill and Alexander Peden.

Some of the stories told of Donald Roy, and which serve to identify him with this class, are worthy of

being preserved. On one occasion, it is said, that when walking after nightfall on a solitary road, he was distressed by a series of blasphemous thoughts, which came pouring into his mind, despite of all his exertions to exclude them. Still, however, he struggled manfully, and was gradually working himself into a better frame, when looking downwards he saw what seemed to be a little black dog trotting by his side. "Ah," he exclaimed, "and so I have got company; I might have guessed so sooner." The thing growled as he spoke, and bounding a few yards before him, emitted an intensely bright jet of flame, which came streaming along the road until it seemed to hiss and crackle beneath his feet. On he went, however, without turning to the right hand or the left, and the thing bounding away as before, stood, and emitted a second jet. "No, no, it winna do," said the imperturbable Donald, "ye first tried to loose my haud o' my Master, and ye would now fain gie me a fleg; but I ken baith him and you owre weel for that." The appearance, however, went on bounding and emitting flame by turns, until he had reached the outer limits of his farm, when it vanished.

About seventy years after the Revolution, he was engaged in what is termed *proofing* the stacks of a corn-yard, on the hilly farm of Castle-Craig. There were two other men with him employed in handing down and threshing the sheaves. The day was exceedingly boisterous, and towards evening there came on a heavy snow storm. "Our elder," said one of the men to his companion, "will hae deep stepping home through the snaw thraves; he would better

stay at the Craig,—will you no ask him ?” “ Man, look,” said the othier, “ what is he about ?—look—look !” At a little distance, in a waste corner of the barn, sat the elder, his broad blue bonnet drawn over his brow, his eyes fixed on the wall ; and ever and anon would he raise his hands and then clasp them together, as if witnessing some scene of intense and terrible interest. At times, too, he would mutter to himself like a deranged person ; and the men, who had dropped their flails, and stood looking at him, could hear him exclaiming in a rapid but subdued tone of voice, “ Let her drive—let her drive ; dinna haud her side to the sea.” Then striking his palms together, he shouted out, “ She’s o’er—she’s o’er,—O the puir wives o’ Dunskaith !—but God’s will be done.” “ Elder,” said one of the men, “ are ye no weel ?—ye wald better gang in till the house.” “ No,” said Donald, “ let’s awa to the burn o’ Nigg ;—there has been ill enough come o’ this sad night already,—let’s awa to the burn or there’ll be more.” And rising from his seat with all the alacrity of his club-playing days, though he was now turned of ninety, he strode out into the storm, followed by the two men. “ What’s that ?” asked one of the men, pointing as he reached the burn, to a piece of red tartan which projected from the edge of an immense wreath, “ Od ! but it’s our Jenny’s *brottie* sticking out o’ the snaw :—An, O ! here’s Jenny hersel.” The poor woman, who had been visiting a friend at the other end of the parish, had set out for Castle-Craig at the beginning of the storm, and, exhausted with cold and fatigue, had sunk down at the side of the stream a few minutes before.

She was carried to the nearest cottage, and soon recovered. And the following morning afforded a sad explanation of the darker vision,—the wreck of a Dunskaith boat, and the dead bodies of some of the crew being found on the beach below the Craig.

A grand-daughter of the elder who was married to a respectable Cromarty tradesman, was seized in her thirtieth year by a dangerous fever, and her life despaired of. At the very crisis of the disease her husband was called by urgent business to the parish of Tarbet. On passing through Nigg, he waited on Donald, and informing him of her illness, expressed his fears that he would not again see her in life. “Step in on your coming back,” said the elder, “and dinna tane heart,—for she’s in gude hands.” The husband’s journey was a hurried one, and in less than three hours after, he had returned to the cottage of Donald, who came out to meet him. “Come in Robert,” he said, “and cool yoursel ; ye hae travelled owre hard ;—come in man, and dinna be sae distressed, for there’s nae cause. Kettie will get o’er this, and live to see the youngest o’ her bairns settled in the world, and doing for themselves.” And his prediction was accomplished to the very letter. The husband, on his return, found that the fever had greatly abated, in a very remarkable manner, a few hours before ; and in less than a week after his wife had perfectly recovered. More than forty years from this time, and when the writer was a little kilted urchin of five summers, he has stood by her knee listening to her stories of Donald Roy. “And now,” has she said, after narrating this one, “all my bairns are doing for them-

selves, as the good man prophesied, and I have lived to tell of him to you, my little curious boy, the bairn of my youngest bairn." I have little of the pride of family in my disposition ; and, indeed, cannot plume myself much on the score of descent, for, for the last two hundred years, my ancestors have been merely shrewd honest people, who loved their country too well to do it any discredit ; but I am unable to resist the temptation of shewing that I can claim kindred with the good old seer of Nigg, and the Addison of Scotland.

There is a still more wonderful story told of Donald Roy than any of these. On one of the days of preparation set apart by the Scottish church previous to the dispensation of the sacrament, it is still customary in the north of Scotland for the elders to address the people in set speeches on their experience of the truth of religion. The day dedicated to this purpose is termed *the day of the men* ; and so popular are its duties, that there are none of the other days which the clergymen might not more safely set aside. When there is a lack of necessary talent among the elders of a parish, they are called dumb elders, and their places are supplied on the day of the men, by the more gifted worthies of the parishes adjoining. Such a lack occurred about a century ago in the eldership of Urray, a semi-Highland parish, near Dingwall ;—and at the request of the minister to the Session of Nigg, that some of the Nigg elders, who, at that time, were the most famous in the country, should come and officiate in the room of his own, Donald Roy and three other men were despatched to Urray.

They reached the confines of the parish towards evening, and when passing the house of a gentleman, one of the heritors, they were greeted by the housekeeper, a woman of Nigg, who insisted on their turning aside and spending the evening with her. Her mistress, she said, was a staunch Roman Catholic, but one of the best creatures that ever lived, and, if the thing was possible, a Christian ;—her master was a kind, good-natured man, of no religion at all ; she was a great favourite with both, and was very sure that any of her friends would be made heartily welcome to the best their hall afforded. Donald's companions would have declined the invitation, as beneath the dignity of men of independence, and elders of the church, but he himself, though quite as much a Whig as any of them, joined with the woman in urging them to accept of it. "Sure I am," he said, "we have been sent here for some special end, and let us not suffer a silly pride to turn us back without our errand."

There was one of the rooms of the house converted by the lady into a kind of chapel. A small altar was placed in the centre ; the walls were hollowed into twelve niches, occupied by little brass images of the Apostles. The lady was on the eve of retiring to this place, to her evening devotions, when the housekeeper came to inform her of her guests, and to request that they should be permitted to worship together, after the manner of their church, in one of the outhouses. Leave was granted, and the lady retired to her room. Instead, however, of kneeling before the altar, as usual, she seated herself at a window. And first there rose from the outhouse a low mellow strain of

music, swelling and sinking alternately, like the murmurs of the night wind echoing through the apartments of an old castle. When it had ceased she could hear the fainter and more monotonous sounds of reading. Anon there was a short pause, and then a scarcely audible whisper, which heightened, however, as the speaker proceeded. Donald Roy was engaged in prayer. There were two wax tapers burning on the altar, and as the prayer waxed louder the flames began to stream from the wicks, as if exposed to a strong current of air, and the saints to tremble in their niches. The lady turned hastily from the window, and as she turned, one of the images toppling over, fell upon the floor; another and another succeeded, until the whole twelve were overthrown. When the prayer had ceased, the elders were summoned to attend the lady. "Let us take our Bibles with us," said Donald, "Dagon has gotten a wearifu' fa', and the ark o' the Bible is to be set up in his place." And so it was;—they found the lady prepared to become a willing convert to its doctrines; and on the following morning the twelve images were flung into the Conan. Rather more than twenty years ago a fisherman when dragging for salmon in a pool of this river, drew ashore a little brass figure, so richly gilt that, for some time, it was supposed to be of gold; and the incident was deemed by the country people an indubitable proof of the truth of the story.

Donald Roy died in the month of January, 1774, in the 109th year of his age, and the 86th of his eldership, and his death and character were recorded in the newspapers of the time. In bearing him com-

pany into an age so recent, I have wandered far from the era of the curates, and must now return. Their time-serving dogmas seem to have had no very heightening effect on the morals of the burghers of Cromarty. Prior to the year 1670, the town was a royal burgh, and sent its commissioner to the Convention, and its representative to Parliament. For the ten years previous, however, its provost and bailies had set themselves with the most perfect unanimity to convert its revenues into gin and brandy, the favourite liquors of the period ; and then to contract heavy debts on its various properties, that they might carry on the process on a more extensive scale. And in this year, when the whole was absorbed, they made over their lands to Sir John Urquhart, the proprietor, “ in consideration,” says the document in which the transaction is recorded, “ of his having instantly advanced, paid, and delivered to them 5000 merks Scots, for outredding them of their necessary and most urgent affairs.” The burgh was disfranchised shortly after by an act of the Privy Council, in answer to a petition from Sir John and the burghers. There is a tradition, that in the previous ten years of license, in which the leading men of Cromarty were so successful in imitating the leading men of the kingdom, the council met regularly once a day in the little vaulted cell beneath the cross, to discuss the affairs of the burgh, and so sorely would they be exhausted, it is said, by a press of business and the brandy, that it was generally found necessary to carry them home at night. But it was all for the good of the place ; and so perseveringly were they devoted to its welfare,

that their last meeting was prolonged for three days together.

Sir John did not long enjoy this accession to his property,—destroying himself in a fit of melancholy, as has been related in the foregoing chapter, three years after. He was succeeded by his son Jonathan, —the last of the Urquharts of Cromarty; for, finding the revenues of his house much dilapidated by the misfortunes of Sir Thomas, and perceiving that all his father's exertions had failed to improve them, he brought the estate to sale, when it was purchased by Sir George Mackenzie of Tarbat. This accomplished courtier and able man, was the scion of a family which, in little more than a century had buoyed itself up by mere dint of talent, from a state of comparative obscurity, into affluence and eminence. The founder, Roderick Mackenzie, was second son to Colin of Kintail, a Highland chieftain of the sixteenth century, and whose eldest son, Kenneth, carried on the line of Seaforth. Roderick, who, says Douglas in his Scottish Peerage, was a man of singular prudence and courage, and highly instrumental in civilizing the northern parts of the kingdom, was knighted by James VI., and left two sons, John and Kenneth. John, the elder, was created a baronet in the succeeding reign, and bequeathed at his death his lands to his son George of Tarbat, the purchaser of the lands of Cromarty; Kenneth, the younger, was founder of the family of Rose-Avoch, and father of the too celebrated Sir George Mackenzie of Dundee. George, the son of John, was born in the castle of Loch Slin, near Tain, in the year 1630; and devoted a long life

to the study of human affairs, and the laws and antiquities of the kingdom. He was one of those wary politicians who, according to Dryden, neither love nor hate, but are honest as far as honesty is expedient, and never glaringly vicious, because it is impolitic to be wicked over much. And never was there a man more thoroughly conversant with the intrigues of a court, or more skilful in availing himself of every chance combination of circumstances. Despite of the various changes which took place in the government of the country, he rose gradually into eminence and power during the reigns of Charles and James, and reached, in the reign of Anne, when he was made secretary of state, and Earl of Cromartie, the apex of his ambition. He found leisure, in the course of a very busy life, to write two historical dissertations of great research,—the one a vindication of Robert III. of Scotland from the charge of bastardy, the other an account of the Gowrie conspiracy. He wrote, besides, a *Synopsis Apocalyptica*, and a short, but masterly treatise on peat-moss, which is quoted and praised by Mr. Rennie of Kilsyth, in his elaborate essay. He is the writer, too, of a curious letter on the second sight, addressed to the Honourable Robert Boyle, and which may be found in the fifth volume of Pepys' Memoirs. On his death, which took place in 1714, his eldest son John succeeded to his titles, and the lands of Tarbat, and his second son, Sir Kenneth, to the estate of Cromarty.

Some time ago, when on a journey in Easter Ross, I had to take shelter from a sudden shower in an old ruinous building, which had once been the dwelling-

*Meddelt
the House -*

house of Lord Cromartie's chamberlain. The roof was not yet gone, but the floors had fallen, and the windows were divested of the frames. Miscellaneous heaps of rubbish were spread over the pavement ; and in one of the corners there was a pile of tattered papers, partially glued to the floor and to each other by the rain, which pattered upon them through the crevices of the roof. The first I examined was written in a cramp old hand, and bore date 1682. At the bottom was the name of the writer, George Mackenzie. The next, which was dated nineteen years later, was in the same hand, but still more cramp. It was signed 'Tarbat. The third was scarcely legible, but I could decipher the word Cromartie, appended to it as a signature. Alas ! I exclaimed, for the sagacious statesman. He was, I perceive, growing great, and becoming old together ; and I doubt much whether the honours of his age, when united to its infirmities, were half so productive of happiness as the hopes and high spirits of his youth. And what *now* is the result of all his busy hours, if they were not completely satisfactory *then* ? Here are a few sybiline-like leaves,—the sole records, perhaps, of his common, every-day affairs ; his literary labours fill a few inches of the shelves of our older libraries ; and a few unnoticed pages in the more prolix histories of our country tell all the rest. Life would not be worth one's acceptance if it led to nothing better ; and yet of all the mere men of the world who ever designed sagaciously, and laboured indefatigably, how very few have been so fortunate as the Earl of Cromartie !

There was no very immediate effect produced by the

Revolution in the parish of Cromarty, and, indeed, but little in the north of Scotland. The Episcopalian clergymen in this quarter, were quite as unwilling to relinquish their livings, as the Presbyterians had been twenty-eight years before ; and setting themselves to reconcile, as they best could, their interest with what they deemed their duty, they professed their willingness to recognise William as their king in *fact*, though not in *law*. To meet this sophism, William demanded, in what was termed the Assurance Oath, a recognition of his authority, as not only actual but legitimate ; and a hundred Episcopal ministers, who complied by taking the oath, were allowed to retain their livings, without being restricted to the jurisdiction of courts of Presbytery. So large a proportion of these fell to the share of the northern counties, that in that part of the kingdom which extends from the frith of Beauly to John o' Groats, and from sea to sea, there was only one presbytery, consisting, for several years after the Revolution, of only eight clergymen.

The next political event of importance which agitated the kingdom, was the Union. And there was at least one of the people of Cromarty, who regarded it with no very complacent feeling. He was a Mr. William Morrison, the parish schoolmaster. I have seen a manuscript of 230 pages, written by this person, between the years 1710 and 1713, containing a full detail of his religious experience ; and as a good deal of his religion consisted in finding fault, and a good deal more in the vagaries of a wild imagination, though the residue seems to have been sincere, he has intro-

duced into his pages much foreign matter, of a kind highly interesting to the local antiquary. He was one of that class who read the Bible in a way it can be made to prove any thing; and he deemed it directly opposed not only to the Union and the Abjuration Oath of the succeeding reign, but to the very act of toleration which secured to the poor curates the privilege of being like himself the open opponents of both. "May we not truly account," says he, "for the deadness and carnality of the Church at this present time (1712) by the great hand many of its members had in carrying on the late Union, of sorrowful memory, whereby our countrey's power to act for herself, both as to religion and libertie, is hung under the belt of idolatrous England. Wo unto thee, Scotland, for thou hast sold thy birth-right. Wo unto thee for the too too much Erastian-like obedience of the most part of thy Church, to the laws of the men of this generation,—men who having established a tolleration for all sorts of wickedness, have set up Baal's altars beside the altars of the Lord. Wo unto thee for that Shibboleth, the oath of abjuration, which the Lord hath permitted to try thy pulse to see how it did beat towards him. Alreadie hath thy Church, through its unvaliant, faint, cowardly, and, I am bold to say, ungodly spirit, suffered woful encroachments to be made on Christ's truths in this kingdom, and yet all under a biassing pretence of witt and policy,—leaving not only hoofs in Egypt, but also many of the best of the flock of God's revealed injunctions. Art thou not discouraged and beaten back, O Church! from thy duty, by the sounding of the shaking leaf of a parlia-

ment of the worms of the earth, that creep, peep, and cry, appearing out of their holes and dens in this time of Scotland's dark night, when only such creatures come abroad in their native shapes and colours. For if the sun did now as clearly shine on the land as at former times, they would not so appear. It is in the night time that evil spirits and wild beasts seize on folk, and cry in the streets to fleg and flichter them ; and such as they find most feared and apprehensive they haunt most. And so, O Scotland, is thy Church affeared and flichtered with the serickings and worryings of an evil Parliament."

CHAPTER XII.

Give us, for our abstractions, solid facts,—
For our disputes, plain pictures.

WORDSWORTH.

RELIGION never operates on the human mind without stamping upon it the more prominent traits of its own character, and very rarely without being impressed in turn (if I may so speak) with some of the peculiar traits of every individual mind on which it acts. Like a chemical test applied to a heterogeneous mixture, it meets much that it must necessarily repel, and much also with which it amalgamates. And we find it not only accommodating itself in this way to the peculiarities of character, but in many instances even adding a new force to these. In the mind of the deep thinker it is moulded into a sublime and living philosophy, and he cannot subsist under its influence without thinking more deeply, and becoming more truly a philosopher than before. And what does it prove to the ignorant and credulous man?—no superstition certainly, and yet so exceedingly akin to superstition in some of its aspects and effects, that it lends, apparently as such, an indirect sanction to the more harmless of his other beliefs,—the wonders of Revelation moulding themselves into a kind of corroborate evidence of whatever else of the supernatural

he had previously credited. It imparts a higher tone of ecstasy to the raptures of the enthusiast—furnishes the visionary with his brightest dreams—gives a more intense gaiety to the joyous—a deeper gravity to the serious—and not unfrequently a darker gloom to the melancholy. Like the most fervent of its apostles, and in much the same degree, it becomes all things to all men. And if this hold true in individual character, its truth is not less strikingly apparent in the character of an age or country. The schoolmaster of Cromarty and the elder of Nigg belonged each to a numerous class; and the very brief sketches of these men, which I have attempted in the foregoing chapter, may properly enough be regarded rather as national than individual. No one who has perused the more popular writings of the Covenanters,—Naphtali, the Hind let Loose, the Tracts of Peter Walker, and the older editions of the Scots Worthies,—will fail of recognising, in my quotation from Morrison, the self same spirit which animated the writers of these volumes, or be disposed to question the propriety of classing Donald Roy with our Cargills, Pedens, and Rutherfords.

The aspect of religion, when thus amalgamated with the enthusiasm or the superstitions of a country, is always in accordance to the direction which that enthusiasm has taken, or to the peculiar cast of these superstitions, or to the nature of the circumstances and events by which they were modified or produced. These last (circumstances and events) must be regarded as primary agents in this process of amalgamation; and they may be divided into three distinct

classes. In the first are great political convulsions which agitate and unsettle the minds of whole communities,—exercising their hopes, their fears, and their imaginations—stirring up their prejudices, and which fix their attention and employ their thoughts on the same set of objects. In every period of the history of every country, there exists a certain quantum of superstition and enthusiasm,—a certain proportion of the men who see visions and dream dreams ; but in times of quiet, when every visionary has his own distinct province assigned him by some little chance peculiar to himself, the quantum is variously directed ; and thus, flowing in a thousand obscure channels, can have no marked effect on the body of a people. But it is not thus in times of convulsion, when all men look one way, are interested in the same events, and direct their energies on the same objects. The quantum increased by the workings of these storms of the people flows also in one channel ; and thus, to a force accumulating in all its details, there is added a collective impetus. Hence its overmastering power. No one acquainted with English history need be reminded of the times of the Commonwealth, when, through an atmosphere of lightning and tempest, whole hordes of visionaries gazed on what they deemed a still brighter, but more placid future, and called each one on his own sect to rejoice in the prospect. And the first French Revolution was productive of similar effects. I need not refer, in proof of the assertion, to the singular interest elicited in our own country by the wild predictions of Brothers, or to the many soberer dreamers who were

led, by the general excitement and portentous events of the period, to interpret amiss a surer word of prophecy. No one intimate enough with human nature to recognise its impulses and passions in their various disguises of belief and opinion, can be ignorant that there is a superstition of scepticism as surely as of credulity, or fail of identifying the wild infidelity of the French Commonwealth with the almost equally wild fanaticism of the English.

The second class of circumstances includes famine, pestilence, and persecution; and, in particular, the effects of the last are strikingly singular. In the others, the mind, unsettled by suffering and terror, ceases to deduce the evils which are overwhelming it from the old fixed causes which govern the universe, and sends out imagination in quest of the new. Demons are abroad—death itself becomes a living spirit, voices of lamentation are heard in the air—spectres seen on the earth. The very prostration of the mind, however, (if I may so speak) sets limits to its delusions; the inventive powers are rather passive than active; but it is not so in seasons of persecution, when our fellow creature, man, is the visible cause of the evils to which we are subjected, and the combative principle, maddened by oppression, is roused into an almost preternatural activity. Hence, and from the energy of excitement, and the melancholy of suffering, the persecuted enthusiast becomes more enthusiastical, and the superstitions of the credulous assume a darker aspect. Even the true religion seems impressed with a new character. As Solomon has well expressed it, “Wise men become mad;” and, seen

through the medium of their disturbed imaginations, the common traits of character and of circumstance are exaggerated into the supernatural. The oppression which is grinding them to the earth assumes, for their destruction, a visible form, and a miraculous control over the laws of nature. The evil spirit is no longer formidable merely from his power of biassing the will, and obliterating the better feelings of the heart; for, assuming a still more terrible character, and a real and tangible shape, he assails them in their hiding places—the cavern and the desert. Even their human enemies, charmed against the stroke of sword and bullet, are rendered invulnerable by the same power. And there are miracles wrought also in their behalf. Their places of hiding are discovered by the persecutor, but a sudden blindness falls on him, and he cannot avail himself of the discovery. They are pursued on the hill side by a troop of horse, but, when exhausted in the flight, a thick cloud is dropped over them, and they escape. The enemy is removed by judgments sudden and fearful. Their curse becomes terribly potent. There is a power given them of reading the inmost thoughts of the heart;—they have visions of the distant—revelations of the future. These, however, are but the traits of a comparatively sober enthusiasm, which persecution cannot goad altogether into madness. In some of the wilder instances we see even the moral principle unsettled. The Huguenots of Languedoc, when driven to their mountains by the intolerance of Louis XIV, were headed by two leaders, a young man whom they named David, and a prophetess whom they termed the Great Mary.

These leaders exercised over them a despotic authority, and when any of them proved refractory, they were condemned by the prophetess without form of trial, and put to death by their infatuated companions. A few years after the battle of Bothwell Bridge, a small party of Covenanters, of whom the greater part, says Walker, "were serious and very gracious souls, though they then stumbled and fell," assembled in a moor near Stirling, and burnt their Bibles. Is it not probable that the terrible feuds which convulsed Jerusalem during the siege of Titus, aggravating in a ten-fold degree the horrors of war and famine, were in part the effects of a similar phrensy?

The third class of circumstances is of a quieter, but not less influential character. When a false religion gives place in any country to the true, there is commonly a mass of what may be termed neutral superstitions which survive the change. Thor and Woden are dethroned and forgotten, but the witch, and the fairy, and the seer, the ghost of the departed, and the wraith of the dying, the spirits of the moor and the forest, of the sea and the river, remain as potent as before. The great national colossuses of heathenism are prostrated before the genius of Christianity, but the little idols of the household can be vanquished by only philosophy and the arts. For religion, as has been already remarked, instead of militating against the minor superstitions, lends them, in at least the darker ages, the support of what seems a corroborative evidence. And as, from natural causes, they must still be receiving fresh accessions of strength in every country where they have taken root, and which re-

mains unvisited by the arts, the testimony of the heathen fathers regarding them, is confirmed by what is deemed the experience of the Christian children. The visions of the seer are as distinct as ever, the witch as malignant, the spectre as terrible. Enthusiasm and Superstition go hand in hand together as before, and, under the supposed sanction of a surer creed. The one works miracles, the other inspires a belief in them ; —the one predicts, the other traces the prediction to its fulfilment ;—the one calls up the spirits of the dead, the other sees them appear, even though uncalled.

From a peculiar circumstance in the past state of this country, its traditional history presents us both with the appearance assumed by superstition when thus connected with religion, and with the very similar aspect which it bears when left to itself. The country had its two distinct tribes of people, believers in nearly the same superstitions, but as unlike, as can well be imagined, in their degree of religious feeling. No Pagan of the past ages could differ more in this respect from the Christians of the present, than the clansmen of the Highland host did from the poor Covenanters, on whom they were turned loose by the Archbishop of St. Andrews. And yet neither Peden nor Cargill nor any of the prophets of the Covenant, were favoured with clearer revelations of the future, than some of the Highland seers. What was deemed prophecy in the one class was reckoned, indeed, merely the second sight in the other ; but there seems to be little danger of error in referring what are evidently the same effects to the same causes. Donald Roy's vision of the foundering boat, and of the woman

perishing in the snow, is quite in character with the visions of the seers. Peden was forty miles from Bothwell Bridge on the day of the battle, but he saw his friends "fleeing and falling before the enemy, with the hanging and hashing, and the blood running like water." "Oh the monzies, the monzies," he exclaimed on another occasion, when fortelling a bloody invasion of the French which was to depopulate the country, "see how they run! see how they run! they are at our fire sides slaying men, women, and children." But there is no lack of such instances, nor of the stories of second sight with which they may be so clearly identified. The tracts of Peter Walker, and the lives of the Scots Worthies abound with the former; some very striking specimens of the latter may be found in Pepys' correspondence with Lord Rea.

Kenneth Ore, a Highlander of Ross-shire, who lived sometime in the seventeenth century, may be regarded as the Peden of the class whom I have described as superstitious without religion. He is said to have served as a field labourer with a wealthy clansman, who resided somewhere near Brahan Castle, and to have made himself so formidable to the clansman's wife by his shrewd sarcastic humour that she resolved on destroying him by poison. With this design she mixed a preparation of noxious herbs with his food, when he was one day employed in digging turf in a solitary morass, and brought it to him in a pitcher. She found him lying asleep on one of those conical fairy hillocks which abound in some parts of the Highlands, and her courage failing her, instead of awakening him,

she set down the pitcher by his side, and returned home. He awoke shortly after, and, seeing the food, would have begun to his repast, but feeling something press coldly against his heart he opened his waistcoat, and found a beautiful smooth stone, resembling a pearl, but much larger, which had apparently been dropped into his breast while he slept. He gazed at it in admiration, and became conscious as he gazed that a strange faculty of seeing the future as distinctly as the present, and men's real designs and motives as clearly as their actions, was miraculously imparted to him. And it was well for him that he should have become so knowing at such a crisis ; for the first secret he became acquainted with was that of the treachery practised against him by his mistress. But he derived little advantage from the faculty ever after, for he led, it is said, till extreme old age, an unsettled, unhappy kind of life,—wandering from place to place, a prophet only of evil, or of little trifling events fitted to attract notice merely from the circumstance of their having been foretold.

There was a time of evil, he said, coming over the Highlands, when all things would appear fair and promising, and yet be both bad in themselves, and the beginnings of what would prove worse. A road would be opened among the hills from sea to sea, and a bridge built over every stream ; but the people would be degenerating as their country was growing better ; there would be ministers among them without grace, and maidens without shame ; and the clans would have become so heartless that they would flee out of their country before an army of sheep. Moss and muir

would be converted into corn land, and yet hunger press as sorely on the poor as ever. Darker days would follow, for there would arise a terrible persecution, during which a ford in the river Oickel, at the head of the Dornoch Frith, would render a passage over the dead bodies of men, attired in the plaid and bonnet; and on the hill of *Finnbheim*, in Sutherlandshire, a raven would drink her full of human blood three times a-day for three successive days. The greater part of this prophecy belongs to the future; but almost all his minor ones are said to have met their fulfilment. He predicted, it is affirmed, that there would be dram shops at the end of almost every furrow; that a cow would calve on the top of the old tower of Fairburn; that a fox would rear a litter of cubs on the hearth-stone of Castle Downie; that another animal of the same species, but white as snow, would be killed on the western coast of Sutherlandshire; that a wild deer would be taken alive at Fortrose Point; that a rivulet in Western Ross would be dried up in winter; and that there would be a deaf Seaforth. But it would be much easier to prove that these events have really taken place than that they have been foretold. Some of his other prophecies are nearly as equivocal, it has been remarked, as the responses of the old oracles, and true merely in the letter, or in some hidden meaning which could be elicited by only the events which they anticipated. He predicted, it is said, that the ancient Chanonry of Ross, which is still standing, would fall "full of Mackenzies;" and as the floor of the building has been used, time immemorial, as a burying place by several powerful

families of this name, it is supposed that the prophecy cannot fail, in this way, of meeting its accomplishment. He predicted, too, that a huge natural arch near the Stonehead of Assynt would be thrown down, and with so terrible a crash that the cattle of Led-more, a proprietor who lived twenty miles inland, would break from their fastenings at the noise. It so happened, however, says the story, that some of Led-more's cattle, which were grazing on the lands of another proprietor, were housed within a few hundred yards of the arch when it fell.—The prophet, shortly before his death, is said to have flung the white stone into a lake, uttering, as his last prediction, that it would be found many years after, and when all his prophecies would be fulfilled, by a lame, hump-backed mendicant.

There is a superstitious belief which, in the extent to which it has been received, ranks next in place to that enthusiasm which inspired the visionary and the prophet; and it was alike common in the past age to the Highlander and the Presbyterian. I allude to the belief that evil spirits have a power of assuming visible forms in which to tempt and affright the good, and sometimes destroy the bad,—a belief as old, at least, as the days of St. Dunstan, perhaps much older. For it seems probable that Satan is merely a successor in the class of stories which illustrates this belief in the infernal deities;—indeed, in some of our more ancient Scottish traditions, nearly the old designation of one of these is retained. The victims of Flowden were summoned at the cross of Edinburgh in the name of Platcock. There is but one story of this

class which I at present remember in the writings of Walker,—that of Peden in the cave of Galloway ; the author of *Waverley*, however, in referring to the story, attests the prevalence of the belief :—The autobiographies of Methodists of the last century abound with such ; they form, too, in this part of the country, (for the story of Donald Roy and the dog, is but one of a thousand), the most numerous class of our traditions. Out of this multitudinous class I shall select, by way of specimen, two stories which belong to the low country party, and two others peculiar to the Highlands.

Not much more than thirty years ago a Cromarty fisherman of a staid serious character, who had been visiting a friend in the upper part of the parish, was returning home, after nightfall, by the Inverness road. The night was still and calm, and a thick mantle of dull yellowish clouds, which descended on every side from the centre to the horizon, so obscured the light of moon, though at full, that beyond the hedges, which bounded the road, all objects seemed blended together without colour or outline. The fisherman was pacing along in one of his happiest moods ; his mind occupied by serious thoughts, tempered by the feelings of a genial devotion, when the stillness was suddenly broken by a combination of the most discordant sounds he had ever heard. At first he supposed that a pack of hounds had opened in full cry in the field beside him ; and then, for the sounds sunk as suddenly as they had risen, that they were ranging the moors on the opposite side of the hill. Anon there was a fresh burst as if the whole pack was baying at him through

the hedge. He thrust his hand into his pocket, and drew out a handful of crumbs, the residue of his last sea stock ; but as he held them out to the supposed dogs, instead of open throats and glaring eyes, he saw only the appearance of a man, and the sounds ceased. " Ah," thought he, " here is the keeper of the pack ; —I am safe." He resumed his walk homewards, the figure keeping pace with him as he went, until, reaching a gap in the hedge, he saw it turning towards the road. He paused to wait its coming up ; but what was his astonishment and horror to see it growing taller and taller as it neared the gap, and then dropping on all fours, assume the form of a horse. He hurried onwards ; the horse hurried too. He stood still ; the horse likewise stood. He walked at his ordinary pace ; the horse walked also, taking step for step with him without either outstripping him or falling behind. It seemed an ugly misshapen animal, bristling all over with black shaggy hair, and lame of a foot. It accompanied him until he reached the gate of a burying ground, which lies about two hundred yards without the town ; where he was blinded for a moment by what seemed an intensely bright flash of lightening ; and, on recovering his sight, he found that he was alone.—There is a much older, but very similar story told of a man of Ferindonald, who, when on a night journey, is said to have encountered the evil one, in five different shapes, and to have lost his senses through fright a few hours *after* ; but this story, unlike the one related, could be rationally enough accounted for by supposing the man to have lost his senses a few hours *before*.

The parishes of Cullicuden and Kiltearn, are situated on opposite sides of the bay of Cromarty ; and their respective manses, at the beginning of the last century, nearly fronted each other ; the waters of the bay flowing between. Their clergymen, at that period, were much famed for the sanctity of their lives, and their diligence in the duties of their profession ; and, from the similarity of their characters, they became strongly attached. They were both hard students ; and for at least two hours after midnight the lights in their closet windows would be seen as if twinkling at each other across the frith. When the light of the one was extinguished, the other regarded it as a signal to retire to rest. " But how now," thought the minister of Kiltearn, as one night, in answer to the accustomed sign, he dropped the extinguisher on his candle, " how now, are the sleeping watchmen to fulfil their duties ! Would it not be better that, like sentinels, we should relieve each other by turns. There would then be at all times within the bounds appointed us, open eyes and a praying heart." He imparted the thought to his friend ; and ever after, as long as they lived, the one minister never retired to bed until the casement of the other had given evidence that he had risen to relieve him. A few years after this arrangement had taken place, a parishioner of Cullicuden, who had been detained by business till a late hour in some of the neighbouring parishes, was walking homewards over the solitary Mulbuoy, when he was joined by a stranger gentleman, who seemed journeying in the same direction, and entered with him into conversation. He found

him to be one of the most intelligent, amusing men he had ever met with. He seemed to know every thing; and though he was evidently no friend to the Church, he did nothing worse than laugh at it. The man of Cullicuden felt more than half inclined to laugh at it too, and more than half convinced by the ludicrous stories of the stranger, that its observances were merely good jokes. In this mood they reached the extreme edge of the Mulbuoy, where it borders on Cullicuden, when the stranger made a full stop. "Our road runs this way," said the man. "Ah," replied the stranger, "but I cannot accompany you: see you that?" pointing, as he spoke, to a faint twinkling light on the opposite side of the bay,—“The watchman is stationed there, and I dare not come a step farther.” It was only from this confession that the Cullicuden man learned the true character of his companion.

The merely superstitious stories of this class are generally of a wilder and more imaginative cast than those which have sprung up within the pale of the Church; and the chief actor in them is presented to us in a more imposing attitude, and in some instances bears rather a better character. Somewhat less than a century ago, (I am wretchedly uncertain in my dates) the ancient castle of Ardyrock in Assynt was tenanted by a dowager lady,—a wicked old woman, who had a singular knack of setting the people in her neighbourhood together by the ears. A gentleman who lived with his wife at a little distance from the castle, was lucky enough to escape for the first few years; but on the birth of a child his jealousy was awakened by some insinuations dropped by the old

lady, and he taxed his wife with infidelity, and even threatened to destroy the infant. The poor woman in her distress wrote to two of her brothers, who resided in a distant part of the county; and in a few days after they both alighted at her gate. They remonstrated with her husband, but to no effect. "We have but one resource," said the younger brother, who had been a traveller, and had spent some years in Italy; "let us pass this evening in the manner we have passed so many happy ones before, and visit to-morrow the old lady of Ardvrock. I will confront her with perhaps as clever a person as herself; and whatever else may come of our visit, we shall at least arrive at the truth." On the morrow they accordingly set out for the castle,—a grey, whinstone building, standing partly on a low moory promontory, and partly out of a narrow strip of lake, which occupies a deep hollow between two hills. The lady received them with much seeming kindness, and replied to their enquiries on the point which mainly interested them, with much apparent candour. "You can have no objection," said the younger brother to her, "that we put the matter to a proof, by calling in a mutual acquaintance." She replied in the negative. The party were seated in the low browed hall of the castle, a large, rude chamber, roofed and floored with stone, and furnished with a row of narrow, unglazed windows, which opened to the lake. The day was calm, and the sun riding over-head in a deep blue sky, unspckled by a cloud. The younger brother rose from his seat on the reply of the lady, and bending towards the floor, began to write upon it with his finger, and

to mutter in a strange language,—and as he wrote and muttered, the waters of the lake began to heave and swell, and a deep fleece of vapour, that rose from the surface like an exhalation, to spread over the face of the heavens. At length, a tall black figure, as indistinct as the shadow of a man by moonlight, was seen standing beside the wall. “Now,” said the brother to the husband, “put your questions to *that*, but make haste;” and the latter, as bidden, enquired of the spectre, in a brief tremulous whisper, whether his wife had been faithful to him. The figure replied in the affirmative: as it spoke, a huge wave from the lake came dashing against the wall of the castle, breaking in at the hall windows; a tremendous storm of wind and hail burst upon the roof and the turrets, and the floor seemed to sink and rise beneath their feet like the deck of a ship in a tempest. “He will not away from us without his *bountith*,” said the brother to the lady,—“whom can you best spare?” She tottered to the door, and as she opened it, a little orphan girl, one of the household, came rushing into the hall, as if scared by the tempest. The lady pointed to the girl: “No, not the orphan,” exclaimed the appearance, “I dare not take her.” Another immense wave from the lake came rushing in at the windows, half filling the apartment, and the whole building seemed toppling over. “Then take the old witch herself,” shouted out the elder brother, pointing to the lady—“take her.”—“Oh, she is mine already,” said the shadow, but her term is hardly out yet; I take with me, however, one your sister will miss more.” It disappeared as it spoke, without, as it seemed, accom-

plishing its threat; but the party, on their return home, found that the infant, whose birth had been rendered the occasion of so much disquiet, had died at the very time the spectre had vanished. It is said, too, that for five years after, the grain produced in Assynt was black and shrivelled, and that the herrings forsook the lochs. At the end of that period, the castle of Ardvrock was consumed by fire, kindled no one knew how; and luckily, as it would seem, for the country, the wicked lady perished in the flames; for after her death things went on in their natural course,—the corn ripened as before, and the herrings returned to the lochs.—The other Highland story of this class is, if possible, of a still wilder character.

The river Auldgrande, after pursuing a winding course of about six miles through the mountainous parish of Kiltarn, falls into the upper part of the frith of Cromarty. For a considerable distance it runs through a precipitous gulf of great depth, and so near do the sides approach to each other, that herd boys have been known to climb across on the trees, which jutting out on either edge, interweave their branches over the centre. In many places the river is wholly invisible; its voice, however, is ever lifted up in a wild, sepulchral wailing, that seems the lament of an imprisoned spirit. In one part there is a bridge thrown over the chasm. “And here,” says Dr. Robertson, in his statistical account of the parish, “the observer, if he can look down on the gulf below without any uneasy sensation, will be gratified by a view equally awful and astonishing. The wildness of the steep and rugged rocks; the gloomy horror of the

cliffs and caverns, inaccessible to mortal tread, and where the genial rays of the sun never yet penetrated ; the waterfalls which are heard pouring down in different places of the precipice, with sounds various in proportion to their distances ; the hoarse and hollow murmuring of the river, which runs at the depth of one hundred and thirty feet below the surface of the earth ; the fine groves of pines which majestically climb the sides of a beautiful eminence, that rises immediately from the brink of the chasm ;—all these objects cannot be contemplated without exciting emotions of wonder and admiration in the mind of every beholder.”

The house and lands of Balconie, a beautiful Highland property, lie within a few miles of the chasm. There is a tradition that, about two centuries ago, the proprietor was married to a lady of very retired habits ; and who, though little known beyond her narrow circle of acquaintance, was regarded within that circle with a feeling of mingled fear and respect. She was singularly reserved ; and it was said she spent more of her waking hours in solitary rambles on the banks of the Auldgrande, in places where no one else would choose to be alone, than in the house of Balconie. Of a sudden, however, she became more social, and seemed solicitous to obtain the friendship of one of her own maids, a simple Highland girl ; but there was a mysterious wildness about her, which the change in her manners had not removed ; and her new companion was always oppressed, when left alone with her, by a fearful shrinking of the heart, as if she were in the presence of a creature of another world. One

day in particular the girl felt more than usually agitated by this feeling ; the lady was silent and melancholy ; there was a fearful meaning in her eyes, an expression in her countenance of grieved anxiety ; at times, too, she would seem as if battling with her feelings ; and a smile that spoke sadder things than even her melancholy, would pass over her features. Towards evening she proposed to her companion a walk to the chasm.

They reached it just as the sun was sinking beneath the hill, and flinging his last gleam on the topmost boughs of the birches and hazels which formed a screen over the opening. All beneath was dark as midnight. "Let us approach nearer the edge," said the lady, speaking for the first time since she had quitted the house. "O no Ma'am, not nearer," said the terrified girl, "the sun is almost set, and sad sights have been seen in the *gully* after nightfall." "Psha," said the lady, "how can you believe such stories ! come, I will show you a path which leads to the water. It is one of the finest places in the world ; I have seen it a thousand times, and must see it again to night. Come," she continued, grasping her by the arm, "I desire it much." "No, lady, no," exclaimed the terrified girl struggling to extricate herself, and not more startled by the proposal than by the almost fiendish expression of mingled anger and fear which now shaded the features of her mistress, "I shall swoon with terror and fall over." "Nay wretch, there is no escape," replied the lady, in a voice heightened almost to a scream, as she dragged her, despite of her exertions, towards the chasm. "Suffer me, Ma'am, to accompany you," said

a strong masculine voice from behind, "your surety, you may remember, must be a willing one ;" the girl turned round, and saw a dark looking man standing beside her ; and the lady, quitting her grasp, clasped her hands in agony on her breast ; and then, with an expression of passive despair, suffered the stranger to lead her towards the chasm. Twice did she turn round as if to address the girl, but though her lips moved, no sound escaped them. On reaching the precipice she turned yet a third time, and untying from her belt a bunch of household keys, she flung them up the bank ; and taking what seemed a farewell look of the setting sun, for the whole had happened in so brief a space, that the sun's upper disk still peeped over the hill, she disappeared with her companion behind the nearer edge of the gulf. The keys struck, in falling, against a block of granite, and sinking into it as if it were a mass of melted wax, left an impression which is still pointed out to the curious visitor. The girl stood rooted to the spot in utter amazement.

On returning home, and communicating her strange story, the husband of the lady, accompanied by every member of the household, rushed out towards the chasm ; and its perilous edge became a scene of shouts, and cries, and the gleaming of torches. But, though the search was prolonged for whole days, and by an eager and still increasing party, it proved fruitless. There lay the stone impressed by the keys ; a little further away was the sheer descent of the chasm ; a shrub, half uprooted, hung dangling from the brink, and there was a faint line drawn along the green mould of the precipice a few yards lower down ; but there

was nought to be seen of the lady. The river below was hidden by a projecting crag, but the Highlanders could hear it fretting and growling over the pointed rocks, like a wild beast in its den ; and as they listened and thought of the lady, the blood curdled at their hearts. At length the search was relinquished, and they returned to their homes to wonder, and surmise, and tax their memories, though in vain, for a parallel instance. Months and years passed away, and the mystery was at length assigned its own little niche among the multitudinous events of the past.

About ten years after, a middle aged Highlander, the servant of a maiden lady who resided near the Auldgrande, was engaged one day in fishing in the river, a little below where it issues from the chasm. He was a shrewd blunt fellow, not more than sufficiently honest, but brave and warm hearted. His mistress was a stingy old woman, who trusted him only when she could not help it. He was more than usually successful this day in his fishing ; and picking out some of the best of the fish for his mother, a very old woman who lived in the neighbourhood, he hid them under a bush, and then set out for his mistress with the rest. "Are you quite sure, Donald," enquired the old lady, as she turned over the contents of his basket, "that this is the whole of your fishing ?—where have you hid the rest ?" "Not one more, lady, could I find in the burn." "Oh Donald," said the lady. "No, lady," reiterated Donald, "devil a one." And then off he went to the bush, to bring away the fish appropriated to his mother. But the

whole had disappeared. A faintly marked track, spangled with scales, remained to show that they had been dragged by some animal along the grass in the direction of the chasm.

The track went winding over grass and stone along the edge of the stream, and struck off, as the banks contracted and became more steep and precipitous, by a beaten path which ran along the edge of the crags at nearly the level of the water. Donald pursued it with the resolution of tracing the animal to its den. The channel narrowed as he proceeded; the stream which, as he entered the chasm, was eddying beneath him in rings of a mossy brown, became one milky strip of white, and, in the language of the poet, "boiled, and wheeled, and foamed, and thundered through;" the precipices, on either hand, beetled, in some places, so high over his head as to shut out the sky, while in others, where they receded, he could barely catch a glimpse of it through a thick screen of leaves and bushes, whose boughs meeting midway, seemed twisted together like pieces of basket work. From the more than twilight gloom of the place, the track he pursued seemed almost lost, and he was quite on the eve of giving up the pursuit, when, turning an abrupt angle of the rock, he found the path terminate in an immense cavern. As he entered, two gigantic dogs, which had been sleeping one on each side of the opening, rose lazily from their beds, and yawning as they turned up their slow heavy eyes to his face, laid themselves down again. A little farther on there was a chair and table of iron apparently much corroded by

the damps of the cavern. Donald's fish, and a large mass of leaven prepared for baking, lay on the table ; in the chair sat the lady of Balconie.

Their astonishment was mutual. "O Donald," exclaimed the lady, "what brings you here?" "I come in quest of my fish," said Donald, "but, O lady, what keeps you here? Come away with me, and I will bring you home ; and you will be lady of Balconie yet." "No no," she replied, "that day is past ; I am fixed to this seat, and all the Highlands could not raise me from it.—Besides, look at these dogs.—O why have you come here. The fish you have denied to your mistress in the name of my jailor, and his they have become ; but how are you yourself to escape?" Donald looked at the dogs. They had again risen from their beds, and were now eying him with a keen vigilant expression, very unlike that with which they had regarded him on his entrance. He scratched his head. "Deed mem," he said, "I dinna weel ken ;—I maun first durk the twa tykes, I'm thinking." "No," said the lady, "there is but one way ;—be on the alert." She laid hold of the mass of leaven which lay on the table, flung a piece to each of the dogs, and waved her hand for Donald to quit the cave. Away he sprung ; stood for a moment, as he reached the path, to bid farewell to the lady ; and, after a long and dangerous scramble among the precipices, for the way seemed narrower, and steeper, and slipperier, than when he had passed by it to the cave, he emerged from the chasm just as the evening was beginning to darken into night. And no one, since the adventure of Donald, has seen aught of the lady of Balconie.

CHAPTER XIII.

The silent earth
 Of what it holds shall speak, and every grave
 Be as a volume, shut, yet capable
 Of yielding its contents to ear and eye.

WORDSWORTH.

IN the woods to the east of Cromarty, and occupying the summit of a green insulated eminence, is the ancient burying ground and chapel of St. Regulus. Bounding the south there is a deep narrow ravine, through which there runs a small tinkling streamlet, whose voice, scarcely heard during the droughts of summer, becomes hoarser and louder towards the close of autumn. The sides of the eminence are covered with wood, which, overtopping the summit, forms a wall of foliage that encloses the burying ground except on the east, where a little opening affords a view of the northern Sutor over the tops of trees which have not climbed high enough to complete the fence. In this burying ground the dead of a few of the more ancient families of the town and parish are still interred ; but by far the greater part of it is occupied by nameless tenants whose descendants are unknown, and whose bones have mouldered undisturbed for centuries. The surface is covered by a short yellow moss, which is gradually encroaching on the low flat stones of the

dead, blotting out the unheeded memorials which tell us that the inhabitants of this solitary spot were once men, and that they are now dust,—that they lived, and that they died, and that they shall live again.

Nearly about the middle of the burying ground there is a low flat stone, over which time is silently drawing the green veil of oblivion. It bears date 1690, and testifies, in a rude inscription, that it covers the remains of Paul Feddes, and his son John, with those of their respective wives. Concerning Paul, tradition is silent ; of John Feddes, his son, an interesting anecdote is still preserved. Sometime early in the eighteenth century, or rather, perhaps, about the close of the seventeenth, he became enamoured of Jean Gallic, one of the wealthiest, and most beautiful young women of her day, in this part of the country. The attachment was not mutual, for Jean's affections were already fixed on a young man, who, both in fortune and elegance of manners was superior, beyond comparison, to the tall, red-haired boatman, whose chief merit lay in a kind, brave heart, a clear head, and a strong arm. John, though by no means a dissipated character, had been accustomed to regard money as merely the price of independence, and he had sacrificed but little to the graces. His love-suit succeeded as might have been expected ; the advances he made were treated with contempt, and the day was fixed when his mistress was to be married to his rival. He became sad and melancholy, and late on the evening which preceded the marriage day, he was seen traversing the woods which surrounded the old castle ; frequently stopping as he went, and, by wild and singular gestures, giving

evidence of an unsettled mind. In the morning after he was no where to be found. His disappearance, with the frightful conjectures to which it gave rise, threw a gloom over the spirits of the townsfolks, and affected the gaiety of the marriage party; it was remembered, ever amid the festivities of the bridal, that John Feddes had had a kind, warm heart; and it was in no enviable frame that the bride, as her maidens conducted her to her chamber, caught a glimpse of several twinkling lights that were moving beneath the brow of the distant Sutor. She could not ask the cause of an appearance so unusual; her fears too surely suggested that her unfortunate lover had destroyed himself; and that his friends and kinsfolks kept that night a painful vigil in searching after the body. But the search was in vain, though every copse and cavern, and the base of every precipice within several miles of the town was visited; and though during the succeeding winter every wreath of sea-weed which the night storms had rolled upon the beach, was approached with a fearful, yet solicitous feeling, scarcely ever associated with bunches of sea-weed before. Years passed away, and, except by a few friends, the kind enterprizing boatman was forgotten.

In the meantime it was discovered, both by herself and the neighbours, that Jean Gallie was unfortunate in her husband. He had prior to his marriage, when one of the gayest, and most dashing young fellows in the village, formed habits of idleness and intemperance which he could not, or would not shake off; and Jean had to learn that a very gallant lover may prove a

very indifferent husband, and that a very fine fellow may care for no one but himself. He was selfish and careless in the last degree ; and, unfortunately, as his carelessness was of the active kind, he engaged in extensive business, to the details of which he paid no attention, but amused himself with wild vague speculations, which, joined to his habits of intemperance, in the course of a few years stripped him of all the property which had belonged to himself and his wife. In proportion as his means decreased he became more worthless, and more selfishly bent on the gratification of his appetites ; and he had squandered almost his last shilling, when, after a violent fit of intemperance, he was seized by a fever, which, in a few days, terminated in death ; and thus, five years after the disappearance of John Feddes, Jean Gallie found herself a poor widow, with scarce any means of subsistence, and without one pleasing thought connected with the memory of her husband.

A few days after the interment, a Cromarty vessel was lying at anchor before sunrise, near the mouth of the Spey. The master, who had been one of Feddes' most intimate friends, was seated near the stern, employed in angling for cod and ling. Between his vessel and the shore, a boat appeared, in the grey light of morning, stretching along the beach under a light and well trimmed sail. She had passed him nearly half a mile, when the helmsman slackened the sheet, which had been close hauled, and suddenly, changing the tack, bore away right before the wind. In a few minutes the boat dashed along side. All the crew, except the helmsman, had been lying asleep upon the beams,

and now started up alarmed by the shock. "How, skipper," said one of them, rubbing his eyes, "how, in the name of wonder, have we gone so far out of our course? What brings us here?" "You come from Cromarty," said the skipper, directing his speech to the master, who, starting at the sound from his seat, flung himself half over the gunwale to catch a glimpse of the speaker. "John Feddes," he exclaimed, "by all that is miraculous!" "You come from Cromarty, do you not?" reiterated the skipper; "Ah, Willie Mouat! Is that you?"

The friends were soon seated in the snug little cabin of the vessel; and John, apparently the least curious of the two, entered, at the other's request, into a detail of the particulars of his life for the five preceding years. "You know, Mouat," he said, "how I felt and what I suffered for the last six months I was in Cromarty. Early in that period I had formed the determination of quitting my native country for ever; but I was a weak foolish fellow, and so I continued to linger, like an unhappy ghost, week after week, and month after month, hoping against hope, until the night which preceded the wedding day of Jean Gallie. Captain Robinson was then on the coast, unloading a cargo of Hollands. I had made it my business to see him; and, after some little conversation, for we were old acquaintance, I broached to him my intention of leaving Scotland. It is well, said he; for friendship sake I will give you a passage to Flushing, and, if it fits your inclination, a berth in the privateer I am now fitting out for cruising along the coast of Spanish America. I find the free trade does not suit

me ;—it has no scope. I considered his proposals, and liked them hugely. There was, indeed, some risk of being knocked on the head in the cruising affair, but that weighed little with me ; I really believe that, at the time, I would as lief have run to a blow as avoided one ;—so I closed with him, and the night and hour were fixed when he should land his boat for me in the *hope* of the Sutors. The evening of that night came, and I felt impatient to be gone. You wonder how I could leave so many excellent friends without so much as bidding them farewell. I have since wondered at it myself ; but my mind was filled, at the time, with one engrossing object, and I could think of nothing else. Positively, I was mad. I remember passing Jean's house on that evening, and of catching a glimpse of her through the window. She was so engaged in preparing a piece of dress, which I suppose was to be worn on the ensuing day, that she did not observe me. I cannot tell you how I felt,—indeed I do not know ; for I have scarcely any recollection of what I did or thought until a few hours after, when I found myself aboard of Robinson's lugger, spanking down the frith. It is now five years since, and, in that time, I have both given and received some hard blows, and have been both poor and rich. Little more than a month ago I left Flushing for Banff, where I intend taking up my abode, and where I am now on the eve of purchasing a snug little property.” “Nay,” said Mouat, “you must come to Cromarty.” “To Cromarty, no, no, that will scarcely do.” “But hear me, Feddes ;—Jean Gallie is a widow.” There was a long pause. “Well, poor young thing,” said

John at length with a sigh, "I should feel sorry for that, I trust she is in easy circumstances?" "You shall hear."

The reader has already anticipated Mouat's narrative. During the recital of the first part of it, John, who had thrown himself on the back of his chair, continued rocking backwards and forwards with the best counterfeited indifference in the world. It was evident that Jean Gallie was nothing to him. As the story proceeded, he drew himself up leisurely, and with firmness, until he sat bolt upright, and the motion ceased. Mouat described the selfishness of Jean's husband, and his disgusting intemperance. He spoke of the confusion of his affairs. He hinted at his cruelty to Jean when he had squandered all. John could act no longer,—he clenched his fist and sprung from his seat. "Sit down, man," said Mouat, "and hear me out,—the fellow is dead."—"And the poor widow?" said John. "Is, I believe, nearly destitute ;—you have heard of the box of broad pieces left her by her father ;—she has few of them now." "Well, if she has'nt, I have ; that's all :—When do you sail for Cromarty?" "To morrow, my dear fellow, and you go along with me ; do you not?"

Almost any one could supply the concluding part of my narrative. Soon after John had arrived at his native town, Jean Gallie became the wife of one who, in almost every point of character, was the reverse of her first husband ; and she lived long and happily with him. Here the novelist would stop ; but I write from the burying ground of St. Regulus, and the tomb-stone of my ancestor is at my feet. Yet why

should it be told that John Feddes experienced the misery of living too long,—that, in his ninetieth year, he found himself almost alone in the world ; for, of his children, some had wandered into foreign parts, where they either died or forgot their father, and some he saw carried to the grave. One of his daughters remained with him, and outlived him. She was the widow of a bold enterprising man, who lay buried with his two brothers, one of whom had sailed round the world with Anson, in the depths of the ocean ; and her orphan child, who, of a similar character, shared, nearly fifty years after, a similar fate, was the father of the writer.

A very few paces from the burying ground of John Feddes, there is a large rude stone reared on two shapeless balusters, and inscribed with a brief record of the four last generations of the Lindsays of Cromarty,—an old family now extinct. In its early days this family was one of the most affluent in the burgh, and had its friendships and marriages among the aristocracy of the country ; but it gradually sunk as it became older, and, in the year 1729, its last scion was a little ragged boy of about ten years of age, who lived, with his widow mother, in one of the rooms of a huge dilapidated house at the foot of the chapel hill. Dilapidated as it was, it formed the sole remnant of all the possessions of the Lindsays. Andrew, for so the boy was called, was a high spirited, unlucky little fellow, too careless of the school and of his book to be much a favourite with the schoolmaster, but exceedingly popular among his play fellows, and the projector of one half the pieces of petty mischief with

which they annoyed the village. But, about the end of the year 1731, his character became the subject of a change, which, after unfixing almost all its old traits, and producing a temporary chaos, set, at length, much better ones in their places. He broke off from his old companions, grew thoughtful and melancholy, and fond of solitude, read much in his Bible, took long journeys to hear the sermons of the more celebrated ministers of other parishes, and became the constant and attentive auditor of the clergyman of his own. He felt comfortless and unhappy. Like the hero of that most popular of all allegories, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, "he stood, clothed in rags, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a burden on his back. And opening the book, he read thereon, and, as he read, he wept and trembled, and, not being able to contain himself, he broke out into a lamentable cry, saying, what shall I do?" Indeed, the whole history of Andrew Lindsay, from the time of his conversion to his death, is so exact a counterpart of the journey of Christian, from the day on which he quitted the city of destruction until he had entered the river, that, in tracing his course, I shall occasionally refer to the allegory; regarding it as the well known chart of an imperfectly known country. All other allegories are mere mediums of instruction, and owe their chief merit to their transparency as such; but it is not thus with the dream of Bunyan, which, through its intrinsic interest alone, has become more generally known than even the truths which are couched under it.

Sometime in the year 1732, a pious Scottish clergyman who resided in England,—a Mr. Davidson of

Denham, in Essex, visited some of his friends who lived in Cromarty. He was crossing the frith, at this time, on a Sabbath morning, to attend the celebration of the Supper in a neighbouring church, when a person pointed out to him a thoughtful looking little boy, who sat at the other end of the boat. "It is Andrew Lindsay," said the person, "a poor young thing seeking anxiously after the truth." "I had no opportunity of conversing with him," says Mr. Davidson in his printed tract, "but I could not observe without thankfulness a poor child, on a cold morning, crossing the sea to hear the word, without shoe or stocking, or any thing to cover his head from the inclemency of the weather." He saw him again when in church, —his eyes fixed steadfastly on the preacher, and the expression of his countenance varying with the tone of the discourse. Feeling much interested in him, he had no sooner returned to Cromarty, than he waited upon him at his mother's, and succeeded in engaging him in a long and interesting conversation, which he has recorded at considerable length.

"How did it happen, my little fellow," said he, "that you went so far from home last week to hear sermon, when the season was so cold, and you had neither shoes nor stockings?" The boy replied in a bashful, unassuming manner, that he was in that state of nature which is contrasted by our Saviour with that better state of grace, the denizens of which can alone inherit the kingdom of heaven. But, though conscious that such was the case, he was quite unaffected, he said, by a sense of his danger. He was anxious, therefore, to pursue those means by which such a sense

might be awakened in him ; and the word preached was one of these. For how, he continued, unless I be oppressed by the weight of the evil which rests upon me, and the woe and misery which it must necessarily entail on the future, how can I value or seek after the only Saviour ? “ But what,” said Mr. Davidson, “ if God himself has engaged to work this affecting sense of sin in the heart ? ” — “ Has he so promised ? ” eagerly enquired the boy. The clergyman took out his Bible, and read to him the remarkable text in John, in which our Saviour intimates the coming of the Spirit to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Andrew’s countenance brightened as he listened, and, losing his timidity in the excitement of the moment, he took the book out of Mr. Davidson’s hand, and, for several minutes, contemplated the passage in silence.

“ Do you ever pray ? ” enquired Mr. Davidson ; Andrew shut the book, and, hanging down his head, timidly replied in the negative. “ What ! not pray ! Do you go so far from home to attend sermons, and yet not bow the knee to God in prayer ? ” — “ Ah,” he answered, “ I do bow the knee perhaps six or seven times a day, but I cannot call that praying to God.—I want the spirit of prayer ; I often ask I hardly know what, and with scarce any desire to receive ; and, often when a half sense of my condition has compelled me to kneel, a vicious wandering imagination carries me away, and I rise again, not knowing what I have said.” — “ Oh,” rejoined the clergyman, “ only persist :—But tell me, was it your ordinary practice in past years, to attend sermons as you do

now?"—"No, Sir, quite the reverse ;—once or twice in a season, perhaps, I went to church, but I used to quit it through weariness ere the service was half completed."—"And how do you account for the change?" "I cannot account for it ;—I only know, that formerly I had no heart to go and hear of God at any time, and that now I dare not keep away." Mr. Davidson then enquired whether he had ever conversed on these matters with Mr. Gordon, the minister of the parish, but was asked with much simplicity, in return, what Mr. Gordon would think of a poor boy like him presuming to call on him? "I have many doubts and uncertainties," said he, "but I am afraid to ask any one to solve them. Once, indeed, but only once, I plucked up resolution enough to enquire of a friend how I might glorify God? He bade me obey God's commandments, for that was the way to glorify him, and I now see the value of the advice ; but I see, also, that only through faith in Jesus Christ can fallen man acquire an ability to profit by it."

"This last answer, so much above his years," says Mr. Davidson, "occasioned my asking him how he had become so intimately acquainted with these truths? He modestly answered, 'I hear Mr. Gordon preach,' as if he had said, my knowledge bears no proportion to the advantages I enjoy." And thus ended the conference ; for, after exhorting him to be much in secret prayer, and to testify to the world the excellence of what he sought after, by being a diligent scholar and a dutiful son, Mr. Davidson bade him farewell. The poor little fellow was wandering, at this period, over that middle space, which lies between the devoted

city and the wicket gate ; struggling, at times, in the deep mire of the slough, at times journeying beside the hanging hill. He had received, however, the roll from Evangelist, and saw the shining light of the wicket becoming clearer and brighter as he advanced.

About half a year from the time of this conversation, Mr. Davidson had again occasion to visit Cromarty ; he called on Andrew, and was struck, in the moment he saw him, by a remarkable change in his appearance. Formerly, the expression of his countenance, though interesting, was profoundly melancholy ; it was now lighted up by a quiet tranquil joy ; and, though modest and unassuming as before, he was less timid. He had passed the wicket. He felt he had become one of the family of God ; and found a new principle implanted within him, which so operated on his affections, that he now hated the evil he had previously loved, and was enamoured of the good he had formerly rejected. Standing, as Bacon has beautifully expressed it, on the “vantage ground of truth,” he could overlook the windings of the track on which he had lately journeyed, not knowing whither he went. “I see,” said he to Mr. Davidson, “that the very bent of my mind was contrary to God,—especially to the way of salvation by Christ, and that I could no more get rid of this disposition through any effort of my own, than I could pull the sun out of the heavens. I see, too, that not only were all my ordinary actions tainted by sin, but that even my religious duties were sins also. And yet, out of these actions and duties, was I accumulating to myself a righteousness

which I meant to barter for the favour of God ; and, though he was at much pains with me in scattering the hoard in which I trusted, yet, after every fresh dispersal, would I set myself to gather anew.—When passing the wicket, he had been shot at from the castle. He was conscious that a power, detached from his mind, had been operating upon it ; for, as it fluctuated on its natural balance between gaiety and depression, he had felt this power weighing it into despair as it sunk towards the lower extreme, and urging it into presumption as it ascended towards the upper. He had seen, also, the rarities at the house of the Interpreter. Religion had communicated to him the art of thinking. It first inspired him with a belief in God, and an anxious desire to know what was his character ; and, as he read his Bible, and heard sermons, his mental faculties, like the wheels of a newly completed engine, felt, for the first time the impulse of a moving power, and began to revolve. It next stirred him up to stand sentinel over the various workings of his mind, and, as he stood and pondered, he became a skilful metaphysician, without so much as knowing the name of the science. As a last step in the process, it brought him acquainted with those countless analogies by which the natural world is rendered the best of all commentaries on the moral. “I am unable,” said he to his friend the clergyman, “to describe the state of my soul as I see it, but I am somewhat helped to conceive of it by the springs which rise by the way side, as I pass westward from the town, along the edge of the bay. They contain only a scanty supply of water, and are matted

over with grass and weeds ; but even now in August, when the fierce heat has dried up all the larger pools, that scanty supply does not fail them. On disentangling the weeds I see the water sparkling beneath. It is thus, I trust, with my heart. The life of God is often veiled in it by the rank luxuriance of evil thoughts, but, when a new manifestation draws these aside, I can catch a glimpse of what they conceal. I can hope, too, that, as the love of Christ is unchangeable, this element of life will continue to spring up in my soul, however dry and arid the atmosphere which surrounds it.

Bunyan has described a green pleasant valley besprinkled with lilies, which lies between the palace of the virgins, and the valley of the shadow of death. "It is blessed," says he, "with an exceedingly fertile soil, and there have been many labouring men who have been fortunate enough to get estates in it." Andrew was one of these. He was humble, and unobtrusive, and but little confident in himself,—a true freeman of the valley of humiliation. Though no longer the leader of his schoolfellows ; for he had now so little influence among them, that he could not prevail on so much as one of them to follow him, he was much happier than before. Leaving them at their wild games, he would retire to his solitudes, and there hold converse with the Deity in prayer, or seek out in meditation some of the countless parallelisms of the two great works which had been spread out before him,—Creation, and the Bible. He was no longer a leader even to himself. "I have been taught," said

he, "by experience, that my heart is too stubborn a thing for my own management, and have so given it up to the management of Christ."—Mr. Davidson saw him, for the last time, about the beginning of the year 1740, when he complained to him of being exposed to many sore temptations. He had met with wild beasts, and had to contend with giants,—he had been astonished amid the gloom of the dark valley, and bewildered in the mists of the enchanted ground. The interesting little tract from which I have drawn nearly all the materials of my memoir, and which, at the time of its first appearance passed through several editions, and was printed more recently at Edinburgh by the publishers for the Sabbath schools, concludes with a brief notice of this conference. The rest of Andrew's story may be told in a very few words. He lived virtuously and happily, supporting himself by the labour of his hands, without either seeking after wealth, or attaining it; he bore a good name, though not a celebrated one, and lived respected, and died regretted. It is recorded on his tomb-stone, in an epitaph whose only merit is its truth, that "he was truly pious from a child,—his whole life and conversation agreeable thereto;" and that his death took place in 1769, in the fiftieth year of his age.

I am aware that in thus tracing the course of my townsman, I lay myself open to a charge of fanaticism. I shall venture, however, on committing myself still further.

One night, towards the close of last autumn, I visited the old chapel of St. Regulus. The moon, nearly at

full, was riding high over head in a troubled sky, pouring its light by fits, as the clouds passed, on the grey ruins, and the mossy, tilt-like hillocks, which had been raised ages before over the beds of the sleepers. The deep, dark shadows of the tombs seemed stamped upon the sward, forming, as one might imagine, a kind of general epitaph on the dead, but inscribed, like the hand-writing on the wall, in the characters of a strange tongue. A low breeze was creeping through the long withered grass at my feet; a shower of yellow leaves came rustling, from time to time, from an old gnarled elm that shot out its branches over the burying ground,—and, after twinkling a few seconds in their descent, silently took up their places among the rest of the departed; the rush of the stream sounded hoarse and mournful from the bottom of the ravine, like a voice from the depths of the sepulchre; there was a low, monotonous murmur, the mingled utterance of a thousand sounds of earth, air, and water, each one inaudible in itself; and, at intervals, the deep, hollow roar of waves came echoing from the caves of the distant promontory, a certain presage of coming tempest. I was much impressed by the melancholy of the scene. I reckoned the tombs one by one. I pronounced the names of the tenants. I called to remembrance the various narratives of their loves, and their animosities, their joys, and their sorrows. I felt, and there was a painful intensity in the feeling, that the gates of death had, indeed, closed over them, and shut them out from the world for ever. I contrasted the many centuries

which had rolled away ere they had been called into existence, and the ages which had passed since their departure, with the little brief space between,—that space in which the Jordan of their hopes and fears had leaped from its source, and after winding through the cares, and toils, and disappointments of life, had fallen into the dead sea of the grave ; and as I mused and pondered,—as the flood of thought came rushing over me, my heart seemed dying within me, for I felt that, as one of this hapless race, vanity of vanity was written on all my pursuits, and all my enjoyments, and that death, as a curse, was denounced against me. But there was one tomb which I had not reckoned, one name which I had not pronounced, one story which I had not remembered. I had not thought of the tomb, the name, the story of that sleeper of hope, who had lived in the world as if he were not of the world, and had died in the full belief that because God was his friend, death could not be his enemy. My eye at length rested on the burial ground of the Lindsays, and the feeling of deep despondency which had weighed on my spirits was dissipated as if by a charm. I saw time as the dark vestibule of eternity ;—the gate of death which separates the porch from the main building, seemed to revolve on its hinges, and light broke in as it opened ; for the hall beyond was not a place of gloom and horror, nor strewn, as I had imagined, with the bones of dead men. I felt that the sleeper below had, indeed, lived well ; the world had passed from him as from the others, but he had wisely fixed his affections, not on the transitory things, of the

world, but on objects as immortal as his own soul ; and as I mused on his life, and his death, on the quiet and comfort of the one, and the high joy of the other, I wondered how it was that men could deem it wisdom to pursue an opposite course.—I could not, at that time, regard Lindsay as a fanatic, nor am I ashamed to confess that I have not since changed my opinion.

CHAPTER XIV.

Around swells mony a grassy heap,
 Stan's mony a sculptur'd stane ;
 An' yet in a' this peopled field,
 No being thinks but ane.

ANON.

THE ruins of the old chapel of St. Regulus occupy the edge of a narrow, projecting angle, in which the burying ground terminates towards the east. Accident and decay seem to have wrought their worst upon them. The greater part of the front wall has been swallowed up, piece meal, by the ravine, which, from the continual action of the stream, and the rains, and snows of so many winters, has been gradually widening and deepening, until it has, at length, reached the site of the building, and is now scooping out what was once the floor. The other walls have found enemies nearly as potent as the stream and the seasons, in the little urchins of the town, who, for the last two centuries, have been amusing themselves, generation after generation, in tearing out the stones, and rolling them down the sides of the eminence. What is now, however, only a broken edged ruin, and a few shapeless mounds, was, three hundred years ago, a picturesque looking, high gabled house, of one storey, perforated by a range of narrow, slit-like windows, and roofed

with ponderous grey slate. A rude stone cross surmounted the eastern gable. Attached to the gable which fronted the west, there was a building roofed over like the chapel, but much superior to it in its style of masonry. It was the tomb of the Urquharts. A single tier of hewn ashlar, with a sloping basement, and surmounted by a Gothic moulding, are now almost its only remains; but from the line of the foundation, which we can still trace on the sward, we see that it was laid out in the form of a square, with a double buttress rising at each of the angles. The area within is occupied by a mouldy, half dilapidated vault, partially filled with bones, and the rubbish of the chapel.

A few yards farther away, and nearly level with the grass, there is an uncouth imitation of the human figure with the hands folded on the breast. It bears the name of the burnt cook; and from time immemorial the children of the place spit on it as they pass. But though tradition bears evidence to the antiquity of the practice, it gives no account of its origin, or, what might, perhaps, prove the same thing, of the character of the poor cook; which we may infer, however, from the nature of the observance, to have been a bad one. I find it stated by Mr. Brady in his *Clavis Calendaria*, that, so late as the last century, it was customary, in some places of England, to spit every time they named the Devil.

Viewed from the ruins, the tombstones of the burying ground seem clustered together beneath the fence of trees which overtops the eminence on the west. I have compared them, in some of my imaginative moods, to a covey of waterfowl sleeping beside the long rank

grass and rushes of a lake. They are mostly all fashioned in that heavy, grotesque style of sculpture, which, after the Reformation had pulled down both the patterns and the patrons of the stone-cutter, succeeded, in this part of the country, to the lighter, and more elegant style of the time of the Jameses. The centre of the stones are occupied by the rude semblances of skulls and cross-bones, dead-bells and sand-glasses, shovels and sceptres, coffins and armorial bearings; while the inscriptions, rude and uncouth as the figures, run in continuous lines round the margins. They tell us, though with as little variety as elegance of phrase, that there is nothing certain in life except its termination; and, taken collectively, read us a striking lesson on the vicissitudes of human affairs. For we learn from them that we have before us the burial places of no fewer than seven landed proprietors, none of whose families now inherit their estates. One of the inscriptions, and but only one, has some little merit as a composition. It is simple and modest; and may be regarded, besides, as a specimen of the language and orthography of Cromarty in the reign of Charles II. It runs thus:—

HEIR · LYES · AT · REST · AN · FAITHFUL · ONE ·
 WHOM · GOD · HAITH · PLEASIT · TO · CAL · VPON ·
 HIR · LYE · SHEE · LIVED · BOTH · POOR · AND · IVST ·
 AND · EY · IN · GOD · SHEE · PVT · HIR · TRVST ·
 GOD'S · LAWES · OBYED · TO · SIN · WAS LEATH ·
 NO · DOVBT · SHEE · DYED · ANE · HAPPIE · DATH ·

IANET · IONSTON · 1679 ·

On the northern side of the burying ground there is a low stone, sculptured like most of the others, but broken by some accident into three pieces. A few

stinted shrubs of broom spread their tiny branches and bright blossoms over the figures ; they are obscured, besides, by rank tufts of moss, and patches of lichens ; but, despite of neglect and accident, enough of the inscription remains legible, to tell us that we stand on the burial place of one John Macleod, a merchant of Cromarty. He kept, besides, the principal inn of the place. He had an only son, a tall, and very powerful man, who was engaged, as he himself had been in his earlier days, in the free trade, and who, for a series of years, had set the officers of the Revenue at defiance. Sometime late in the reign of Queen Anne, he had succeeded in landing part of a cargo among the rocks of the hill of Cromarty, and in transporting it, night after night, from the caverns in which he had first secreted it, to a vault in his father's house, which opened into the cellar. After concealing the entrance, he had seated himself beside the old man at the kitchen fire, when two Revenue officers entered the apartment, and, taking their places beside a table, called for liquor. Macleod drew his bonnet hastily over his brow, and edging away from the small iron lamp which lighted the kitchen, muffled himself up in the folds of his dreadnought greatcoat. His father supplied the officers. "Where is Walter, your son?" inquired the better dressed of the two, a tall, thin man, equipped in a three cornered hat, and a blue coat seamed with gold lace ; "I trust he does not still sail the Swacker." "Maybe no," said the old man dryly. "For I have just had intelligence," continued the officer, "that she was captured this morning by Captain Manton, after firing on her Majesty's flag ; and it will go pretty

hard, I can tell you, with some of the crew." A third Revenue officer now entered the kitchen, and going up to the table whispered something to the two others. "Please Mr. Macleod," said the former speaker to the innkeeper, "bring us a light, and the key of your cellar." "And wherefore that?" inquired the old man, "shew me your warrant. What would ye do with the key?" "Nay sir, no trifling," you brought here last night three cart loads of Geneva, and stored them up in a vault below your cellar;—the key and a light." There was no sign, however, of procuring either. "Away," he continued, turning to the officer who had last entered, "away for a candle and a sledge hammer." He was just quitting the room when the younger Macleod rose from his seat, and came forward. "Look ye, gentlemen," he said in a tone of portentous coolness, "I shall take it upon me to settle this affair, you and I have met before now, and are a little acquainted. The man who first moves out of this place in the direction of the cellar, shall never move afterwards in any direction at all." He thrust his hand, as he spoke, beneath the folds of his greatcoat, and seemed extricating some weapon from his belt. "In upon him lads," shouted out the tall officer, "devil though he be, he is but one; the rest are all captured." In a moment two of the officers had thrown themselves upon him; the third laid hold of his father. A tremendous struggle ensued;—the lamp was overturned and extinguished. The smuggler, with a Herculean effort, shook off both his assailants, and as they rushed in again to close with him, he dealt one of them so terrible a blow that he rolled,

stunned and senseless, on the floor. The elder Macleod, a hale old man, had extricated himself at the same moment, and mistaking, in the imperfect light, his son for one of the officers, and the fallen officer for his son, he seized on the kitchen poker, and just as the champion had succeeded in mastering his other opponent, he struck at him from behind, and felled him in an instant. In less than half an hour he was dead. The unfortunate old man did not long survive him ; for after enduring, for a few days, the horrors of mingled grief and remorse, his anguish of mind terminated in insanity, and he died in the course of the month.

For some time after the house he had inhabited lay without a tenant, and stories were circulated among the townfolks of its being haunted. One David Hood, a tailor of the place, was frightened almost out of his wits, in passing it on a coarse winter night, when neither fire nor candle in the whole range of houses on either side, shewed him that there was any body awake in town but himself. A fearful noise seemed to proceed from one of the lower rooms, as if a party of men were engaged in some desperate struggle ; —he could hear the dashing of furniture against the floor, and the blows of the assailants ; and after a dull hollow sound twice repeated, there was a fearful shriek, and a mournful exclamation in the voice of the deceased shopkeeper, “I have murdered my son ! I have murdered my son !” The house was occupied, notwithstanding, some years after, though little to the comfort of the tenants. Often were they wakened at midnight, it is said, by noises as if every piece of fur-

niture in the apartment was huddled into the middle of the floors; though in the morning not a chair or table would be found displaced; at times, too, it would seem as if some person heavily booted was traversing the rooms overhead; and some of the inmates, as they lay a-bed, have seen clenched fists shaken at them from outside the windows, and pale, threatening faces looking in upon them through half open doors. There is one of the stories which, but for a single circumstance, I would deem more authentic, not merely than any of the others, but than most of the class to which it belongs. It was communicated to me by a sensible and honest man,—a man, too, of very general information. He saw, he said, what he seriously believed to be the apparition of the younger Macleod; but as he was a child of only six years at the time, his testimony may, perhaps, be more rationally regarded as curiously illustrative of the force of imagination at a very early age, than as containing any legitimate proof of the reality of such appearances. He had a sister, a few years older than himself, who attended some of the younger members of the family, which tenanted, about sixty years ago, the house once occupied by the shop-keeper. One Sunday forenoon, when all the inmates had gone to church except the girl and her charge, he stole in to see her, and then amused himself in wandering from room to room, gazing at the furniture and the pictures. He at length reached one of the garrets, and was turning over a heap of old magazines in quest of the prints, when he observed something darken the door, and looking up, found himself in the presence of what seemed to be a very tall, broad-shouldered

man, with a pale, ghastly countenance, and wrapped up in a brown, dreadnought greatcoat. A good deal surprised, but not at all alarmed, for he had no thought at the time that the appearance was other than natural, he stepped down stairs and told his sister that there was a "muckle big man in the top of the house." She immediately called in a party of the neighbours, who, emboldened by the day light, explored every room and closet from the garrets to the cellar, but they saw neither the tall man, nor the dreadnought greatcoat.

The old enclosure of the burying ground, which seems originally to have been an earthen wall, has now sunk into a grassy mound, and on the southern and western sides some of the largest trees of the fence,—a fine stately ash, fluted like a Grecian column, a huge elm roughened over with immense wens, and a low bushy larch with a bent, twisted trunk, and weeping branches, spring directly out of it. At one place we see a flat tombstone lying a few yards outside the mound. The trees which shoot up on every side, fling so deep a gloom over it during the summer and autumn months, that we can scarcely decipher the epitaph; and in winter it is not unfrequently buried under a wreath of withered leaves. By dint of some little pains, however, we come to learn from the darkened and half dilapidated inscription, that the tenant below was one Alexander Wood, a native of Cromarty, who died in the year 1690; and that he was interred in this place at his own especial desire. His wife and some of his children have taken up their places beside him;—thus lying apart like a family of hermits;

while his story, which, almost too wild for tradition itself, is yet as authentic as most pieces of written history, affords a curious explanation of the circumstance which directed their choice.

Wood was a man of strong passions, sparingly gifted with common sense, and exceedingly superstitious. No one could be kinder to one's friends or relatives, or more hospitable to a stranger; but when once offended, he was implacable. He had but little in his power either as a friend or an enemy,—his course through the world lying barely beyond the bleak edge of poverty. If a neighbour, however, dropped in by accident at meal time, he would not be suffered to quit his house until he had shared with him his simple fare. There was benevolence in the very grasp of his hand, and the twinkle of his eye, and in the little set speech, still preserved by tradition, in which he used to address his wife every time an old or mutilated beggar came to his door:—"Alms, gudewife," he would say, "alms to the cripple, and the blin', and the broken down." When injured or insulted, however, and certainly no one could do either without being very much in the wrong, there was a toad-like malignity in his nature, which would come leaping out like the reptile from its hole, and no power on earth could shut it up again. He would sit hatching his venom for days and weeks together with a slow, tedious, unoperative kind of perseverance, that achieved nothing. He was full of anecdote, and, in all his stories, human nature was exhibited in only its brightest lights, and its deepest shadows, without the slightest mixture of that medium tint which gives colour to its working, every-day suit.

Whatever was bad in the better class, he transferred to the worse, and *vice versa* ; and thus not even his narratives of the supernatural were less true to nature and fact, than his narratives of mere men and women. And he dealt with the two classes of stories after one fashion,—lending the same firm belief to both alike.

In the house adjoining the one in which he resided, there lived a stout little man, a shoemaker, famous in the village for his great wit, and his very considerable knavery. His jokes were mostly practical, and some of the best of them were exceedingly akin to felonies. Poor Wood could not understand his wit, but, in his simplicity of heart, he deemed him honest, and would fain have prevailed on the neighbours to think so too. He knew it, he said, by his very look. Their gardens, like their houses, lay contiguous, and were separated from each other, not by a fence, but by four undressed stones laid in a line. Year after year was the garden of Wood becoming less productive ; and he had a strange misgiving, but the thing was too absurd to be spoken of, that it was growing smaller every season by the breadth of a whole row of cabbages. On the one side, however, were the back walls of his own and his neighbour's tenements ; the four large stones stretched along the other ; and nothing, surely, could be less likely than that either the stones or the houses should take it into their heads to rob him of his property. But the more he strove to exclude the idea, the more it pressed upon him. He measured and remeasured to convince himself that it was a false one, and found that he had fallen on just the means of establishing its truth : The garden was actually growing smaller.

But how? Just because it was bewitched! It was shrinking into itself under the force of some potent enchantment, like a piece of plaiding in the fulling mill. No hypothesis could be more congenial; and he would have held by it, perhaps, until his dying day, had it not been struck down by one of those chance discoveries which destroy so many beautiful systems, and spoil so much ingenious philosophy, quite in the way that Newton's apple struck down the vortices of Descartes.

He was lying a-bed one morning in spring, about daybreak, when his attention was excited by a strange noise which seemed to proceed from the garden. Had he heard it two hours earlier, he would have wrapped up his head in the bed-clothes and lain still; but now, that the cock had crowed, it could not, he concluded, be other than natural. Hastily throwing on part of his clothes, he stole warily to a back window, and saw, between him and the faint light that was beginning to peep out in the east, the figure of a man, armed with a lever, tugging at the stones. Two had already been shifted a full yard nearer the houses, and the figure was straining over a third. Wood crept stealthily out at the window, crawled on all fours to the intruder, and, tripping up his heels, laid him across his lever. It was his knavish neighbour the shoemaker. A scene of noisy contention ensued; groups of half-dressed townsfolks, looming horrible in their shirts and nightcaps through the grey of morning, came issuing through the lanes and the closes; and the combatants were dragged asunder. And well was it for the shoemaker that it happened so; for Wood, though in his

sixtieth year, was strong enough, and more than angry enough, to have torn him to pieces. Now, however, that the warfare had to be carried on by words, the case was quite reversed.

“Neebours,” said the shoemaker, who had the double advantage of being exceedingly plausible, and decidedly in the wrong, “I’m desperately ill used this morning—desperately ill used ;—He would baith rob and murder me. I lang jaloused ye see, that my wee bit o’ a yard was growing littler and littler ilka season ; and, though no verra ready to suspect folk, I just thought I would keep watch, and see wha was shifting the mark stanes. Weel, and I did ;—late and early did I watch for mair now than a fortnight ; and wha did I see this morning through the back winnock but auld Sandy Wood there in his verra sark, —O, it’s no him that has ony thought o’ his end ! poking the stones wi a lang kebar, intil the verra heart o’ my grun’.” “See,” said he, pointing to the one that had not yet been moved, “see if he hasna shifted it a lang ell ; and only notice the craft o’ the body in tiring up the yird about the lave, as if they had been a’ moved frae my side. Weel, I came out and challenged him, as wha widna ?—says I, Sawney my man, that’s no honest ; I’ll no bear that ; and nae mair had I time to say, when up he flew at me like a wull cat, and if it was’na for yoursels, I daresay he would hae throttled me. Look how I’m bleedan ;—and only till him,—look till the cankart deceitful bodie, if he has one word to put in for himsel.”

There was truth in, at least, the last assertion, for poor Wood, mute with rage and astonishment, stood

listening, in utter helplessness, to the astounding charge of the shoemaker,—almost the very charge he himself had to prefer. Twice did he spring forward to grapple with him, but the neighbours held him back, and every time he essayed to speak, his words, massed and tangled together, like wreaths of sea-weed in a hurricane, actually stuck in his throat. He continued to rage for three days after, and when the eruption had at length subsided, all his former resentments were found to be swallowed up, like the lesser craters of a volcano, in the gulf of one immense hatred.

His house, as has been said, lay contiguous to the house of the shoemaker, and he could not avoid seeing him every time he went out and came in, a circumstance which he, at first, deemed rather gratifying than otherwise. It prevented his hatred from becoming vapid by setting it a-working at least ten times a-day, as a musket would a barrel of ale if discharged into the bung hole. Its frequency, however, at length sickened him, and he had employed a mason to build a stone wall, which, by stretching from side to side of the close, was to shut up the view, when he sickened in right earnest, and at the end of a few days found himself a-dying. Still, however, he was possessed by his one engrossing resentment. It mingled with all his thoughts of the past and the future ; and not only was he to carry it with him to the world to which he was going, but also to leave it behind him as a legacy to his children. Among his many other beliefs, there was a superstition, handed down from the times of the monks, that at the day of final doom all the people of the sherriffdom were to be judged on the moor of

Navity; and both the judgment and the scene of it, he had indissolubly associated with the shoemaker and the four stones. Experience had taught him the importance of securing a first hearing for his story; for was his neighbour, he concluded, to be before hand with him, he would have as slight a chance of being righted at Navity as in his own garden. After brooding over the matter for a whole day he called his friends and children round his bed, and raised himself on his elbow to address them.

“I’m wearing awa, bairns and neebours,” he said, “and it vexes me sair that that wretched bodie should see me going afore him. Mind Jock, that ye’ll build the dike, and make it heigh, heigh, and stobbie on the top; and O keep him out o’ my lykewake, for should he but step in at the door, I’ll rise, Jock, frae the verra straiiking board, and do murder. Dinna let him so muckle as look on my coffin. I’ve been pondering a’ this day about the fearfu’ meeting at Navity, and the march-stanes; and I’ll tell you, Jock, how we’ll match him. Bury me ayont the saint’s dike, on the Navity side, and dinna lay me deep. Ye ken the bonny green hillock, speckled o’er wi’ gowans and puddock flowers; bury me there, Jock, and yoursel, and the auld wife may just, when your hour comes, tak up your places beside me. We’ll a’ get up the first tout,—the ane helping the other; and I’se wad a’ I’m worth i’ the warld, we’ll be half way up at Navity afore the shochlan, short-legged bodie wins o’er the dike.” Such was the dying injunction of Sandy Wood; and his tombstone still remains to testify that it was religiously attended to. An Englishman who

came to reside in the parish, nearly an age after, and to whom the story had been imparted in a rather imperfect manner, was shocked by what he deemed his unfair policy. The litigants, he said, should start together; he was certain it would be so in England, where a fair field was all that would be given to St. Dunstan himself, though he fought with the devil. And that it might be so here he buried the tombstone of Wood in an immense heap of clay and gravel. It would keep him down, he said, until the little fellow would have clambered over the wall. The townsfolds, however, who were better acquainted with the merits of the case, shovelled the heap aside; and it now forms two little hillocks which overtop the stone, and which, from the nature of the soil, are still more scantily covered with verdure than any part of the surrounding bank.

CHAPTER XV.

Like a timeless birth the womb of fate
 Bore a new death of unrecorded date,
 And doubtful name.

MONTGOMERY.

IN the history of every community there are periods of comparative quiet, when the great machine of society performs all its various movements so smoothly and regularly, that there is nothing to remind us of its being in motion. And who has not remarked that when an unlooked for accident sets it a-jarring, by breaking up some minor wheel or axis, there follows a whole series of disasters,—pressing the one upon the other, with stroke after stroke, until, stunned by the repetition, we begin to tremble lest the machine itself be falling into pieces. We live, perhaps, in some quiet village, and we see our neighbours, the inhabitants, moving noiselessly around us,—the young rising up to maturity, the old descending slowly to the grave. Death for a whole series of years draughts out his usual number of conscripts from among only the weak and the aged; and there is no irregular impressment of the young and vigorous in the way of accident. Anon, however, there succeeds a series of disasters. One of the villagers topples over a precipice, one is engulfed in a morass, one is torn to pieces by the wheels of an engine, one perishes in fording a river,

one falls by the hand of an enemy, one dies by his own. And then in a few months, perhaps, the old order of things is again established, and all goes on regularly as before. In the phenomena of even the inanimate world we see marks of a similar economy. Whoever has mused for a single half hour by the side of a waterfall, must have remarked that, without any apparent change in the volume of the stream, the waters descend at one time louder and more furious, at another gentler and more subdued. Whoever has listened to the howlings of the night wind must have heard it sinking, at intervals, into long hollow pauses, and then rising and sweeping onwards, gust after gust. Whoever has stood on the sea shore during a tempest must have observed that the waves roll towards their iron barrier in alternate serieses of greater and lesser,—now fretting ineffectually against it, now thundering irresistibly over. But between the irregularities of the inanimate world, and those of the rational, there exists one striking difference. We may assign natural causes for the alternate rises and falls of the winds and waters ; but it is not thus in most instances with those ebbs and flows, and gusts and pauses, which occur in the world of man. They set our reasonings at defiance, and we can refer them to only the will of the Deity. We can only say regarding them, that the climax is a favourite figure in the book of Providence ;—that God speaks to us in his dispensations, and in the more eloquent turns of his discourse, piles up instance upon instance, with sublime and impressive profusion.

To the people of Scotland the whole of the seven-

teenth century was occupied by one continuous series of suffering and disaster. And though we can assign causes for every one of the evils which compose the series, just as we can assign causes for every single accident which befalls the villagers, or for the repeated attacks and intervening pauses of the hurricane, it is a rather different matter to account for the series itself. In flinging a die we may chance on any one certain number as readily as on any other ; but it would be a rare occurrence, indeed, should the same number turn up twenty times together. And is there nothing singular in the fact, that, for a whole century, a nation should be invariably unfortunate in every change with which it was visited, and meet with only disaster in all its undertakings. There turned up an unlucky number at every cast of the die. Even when the shout of the persecutor, and the groans of his victim, had ceased to echo among our rocks and caverns, the very elements arrayed themselves against the people, and wasting famine, and exterminating pestilence did the work of the priest and the tyrant. I am acquainted with no writer who has described this last infliction of the series so graphically, and with such power, as Peter Walker in his life of Cargill. Other contemporary historians looked down on this part of their theme from the high places of society ;—they were the soldiers of a well victualled garrison, situated in the midst of a wasted country, and sympathized but little in the misery that approached them no nearer than the outer gate. But it was not thus with the poor Pedlar ;—he was barred out among the sufferers, and exposed to the evils which he so feelingly describes.

One night in the month of August, 1694, a cold east wind, accompanied by a dense sulphurous fog, passed over the country, and the half filled corn was struck with mildew. It shrunk and whitened in the sun, till the fields seemed as if sprinkled with flour, and where the fog had remained longest—for in some places it stood up like a chain of hills during the greater part of the night—the more disastrous were its effects. From this unfortunate year till the year 1701, the land seemed as if struck with barrenness, and such was the change in the climate, that the seasons of summer and winter were cold and gloomy in nearly the same degree. The wonted heat of the sun was withholden, the very cattle became stunted and meagre, the moors and thickets were nearly divested of their feathered inhabitants, and scarcely a fly or any other insect was to be seen even in the beginning of autumn. November and December, and in some places January and February, became the months of harvest; and labouring people contracted diseases which terminated in death, when employed in cutting down the corn among ice and snow. Of the scanty produce of the fields much was left to rot on the ground, and much of what was carried home proved unfit for the sustenance of either man or beast. There is a tradition that a farmer of Cromarty employed his children, during the whole winter of 1694, in picking out the sounder grains of corn from a blasted heap, the sole product of his farm, to serve for seed in the ensuing spring.

In the meantime the country began to groan under famine. The little portions of meal which were

brought to market were invariably disposed of, and at an exorbitant price, before half the people were supplied ; “and then,” says Walker, “there would ensue a screaming, and clapping of hands among the women.” “How shall we go home,” he has heard them exclaim, “and see our children dying of hunger ? —they have had no food for these two days, and we have nothing to give them.” There was many “a black and pale face in Scotland,” and many of the labouring poor, ashamed to beg, and too honest to steal, shut themselves up in their comfortless houses, and would sit with their eyes fixed on the floor, till their very sight failed them. The savings of the careful and industrious were soon dissipated ; and many who were in easy circumstances when the scarcity came on, were sunk in abject poverty ere it had passed away. Human nature is a sad thing when subjected to the test of circumstances so trying. As the famine increased, people came to be so wrapped up in their own sufferings, that wives thought not of their husbands, nor husbands of their wives, parents of their children, nor children of their parents.” “And their staff of bread,” says the Pedlar, “was so utterly broken, that when they ate they were neither satisfied nor nourished. They could think of nothing but food, and being wholly unconcerned whether they went to heaven or hell, the success of the gospel came to a stand.”

The pestilence, which accompanied this terrible visitation, broke out in November, 1694, when many of the people were seized by “strange fevers, and sore fluxes of a most infectious nature,” which defied the

utmost power of medicine. "For the oldest physicians," says Walker, "had never seen the like before, and could make no help." In the parish of West Calder out of nine hundred "examinable persons" three hundred were swept away; and in Livingston in a little village called the Craigs, inhabited by only six or eight families, there were thirty corpses in the space of a few days. In the parish of Resolis, whole villages were depopulated, and the foundations of the houses, for they were never inhabited afterwards, can still be pointed out by old men of the place. So violent were the effects of the disease, that people, who in the evening were in apparent health, would be found lying dead in their houses next morning, "the head resting on the hand, and the face and arms not unfrequently gnawed by the rats." The living were wearied with burying the dead; bodies were drawn on sledges to the place of interment, and many got neither coffin nor winding sheet. "I was one of four," says the Pedlar, "who carried the corpse of a young woman a mile of way; and when we came to the grave, an honest poor man came and said—"you must go and help me to bury my son; he has lain dead these two days." We went, and had two miles to carry the corpse, many neighbours looking on us, but none coming to assist. I was credibly informed," he continues, "that in the north, two sisters, on a Monday morning, were found carrying their brother on a barrow with bearing ropes, resting themselves many times, and none offering to help them." There is a tradition that in one of the villages of Resolis the sole survivor was an idiot, and that his mother was

the last person who died in it of the disease. He waited beside the corpse for several days, and then taking it up on his shoulders he carried it to a neighbouring village, and left it standing upright beside a garden wall.

Such were the sufferings of the people of Scotland in the seventeenth century, and such the phenomena of character which these sufferings elicited. We ourselves have seen nearly the same process repeated in the nineteenth, and—so invariably fixed are the principles of human nature, and the succession, in even the moral world, of cause and effect,—with nearly the same results. The study of mind cannot be prosecuted in quite the same manner as the study of matter. We cannot subject human character, like an earth or a metal, to the test of experiments which may be varied or repeated at pleasure ; on the contrary, many of its most interesting traits are developed only by causes over which we have no control. But may we not regard the whole world as an immense laboratory, in which the Deity is the grand chemist, and his dispensations of Providence a course of experiments ? Into this laboratory we are admitted, both as subjects to be acted upon, and as spectators ; and, though we cannot in either capacity materially alter the course of the exhibition, we may acquire much wholesome knowledge by registering the circumstances of each process, and its various results.

In the year 1817 a new and terrible pestilence broke out in a densely peopled district of Hindostan. During the twelve succeeding years it was “going to and fro, and walking up and down” in that immense

tract of country which intervenes between British India, and the Russian dominions in Europe. It passed from province to province, and city to city. Multitudes "which no man could number," stood waiting its approach in anxiety and terror, a few solitary mourners gazed at it from behind. It journeyed by the highways, and strewed them with carcasses. It coursed along the rivers, and vessels were seen drifting in the current with their dead. It overtook the caravan in the desert, and the merchant fell from his camel. It followed armies to the field of battle, struck down their standards, and broke up their array. It scaled the great wall of China, forded the Tigris and the Euphrates, threaded with the mountaineer the passes of the frozen Caucasus, and traversed with the mariner the wide expanse of the Indian Ocean. Vainly was it deprecated with the rites of every religion, exorcised in the name of every god. The Bramin saw it rolling onwards, more terrible than the car of Juggernaut, and sought refuge in his temple, but the wheel passed over him, and he died. The wild Tartar raised his war-cry to scare it away, and then, rushing into a darkened corner of his hut, prostrated himself before his idol, and expired. The Dervise ascended the highest tower of his mosque to call upon Allah and the prophet, but it grappled with him ere he had half repeated his prayer, and he toppled over the battlements. The priest unlocked his relics, and then, grasping his crucifix, hied to the bedside of the dying, but, as he doled out the consolations of his faith, the pest seized on his vitals, and he sunk howling where he had kneeled. And alas for the philosopher!

Silent and listless he awaited its coming ; and had the fountains of the great deep been broken up,—had its proud waves come rolling, as of old, over wide extended continents,—foaming around the summit of the hills, and prostrating with equal ease the grass of the field and the oaks of the forest, he could not have met the inundation with a less effective resistance.—It swept away in its desolating progress fifty millions of the human species.

In the spring of 1831 the disease entered the Russian dominions, and in a few brief months, after devastating the inland provinces, began to ravage the shores of the Baltic. The harbours, as is usual in the summer season, were crowded with vessels from every port of Britain ; and the infection spread among the seamen. To guard against its introduction into this country a rigid system of quarantine was established by the Government ; and the bay of Cromarty was one of the places appointed for the reception of vessels until their term of restriction should have expired. The whole eastern coast of Britain could not have afforded a better station ; as, from the security and great extent of the bay, entire fleets can lie in it safe from every tempest, and at a distance of more than two miles from any shore.

On a calm and beautiful evening in the month of July, 1831, a little fleet of square rigged vessels were espied in the offing, slowly advancing towards the bay. They were borne onwards by the tide, which, when flowing, rushes with much impetuosity through the narrow opening, and, as they passed under the northern Sutor, there was seen from the shore, relieved by the

dark cliffs which frowned over them, a pale yellow flag drooping from the mast-head of each. As they advanced further on, the tide began to recede. The foremost was towed by her boats to the common anchoring ground ; and the burden of a Danish song, in which all the rowers joined, was heard echoing over the waves with a cadence so extremely melancholy, that, associating in the minds of the townspeople with ideas of death and disease, it seemed a coronach of lamentation poured out over the dead and the expiring. The other vessels threw out their anchors opposite the town ;—groups of people, their countenances shaded by anxiety, sauntered along the beach ; and children ran about, shouting at the full pitch of their voices, that the ships of the plague had got up as far as the ferry. As the evening darkened, little glimmering lights, like stars of the third magnitude, twinkled on the mast heads from whence the yellow flags had lately depended ; and never did astrologer experience greater dismay when gazing at the two comets, the fiery and the pale, which preceded those years of pestilence and conflagration that wasted the capital of England, than some of the people of Cromarty did when gazing at these lights.

Day after day vessels from the Baltic came sailing up the bay, and the fears of the people, exposed to so continual a friction, began to wear out. The first terror, however, had been communicated to the nearer parishes, and from them to the more remote ; and so on it went, escorted by a train of vagabond stories that, like felons flying from justice, assumed new aspects at every stage. The whole country talked of

nothing but Cholera and the Quarantine port. Such of the shopkeepers of Cromarty as were most in the good graces of the country women who come to town laden with the produce of the dairy and hen-cot, and return with their little parcels of the luxuries of the grocer, experienced a marked falling away in their trade. Occasionally, however, a few of the more courageous housewives might be seen creeping warily along our streets ; but, in coming in by the road which passes along the edge of the bay, they invariably struck up the hill, if the wind blew from off the quarantine vessels, and winding by a circuitous route among the fields and cottages, entered the town on the opposite side. A lad who ran errands to a neighbouring burgh found that few of the inhabitants were so desperately devoted to business as to incur the risk of receiving the messages he brought them ; and, from the inconvenient distance at which he was held by even the less cautious, he entertained serious thoughts of providing himself with a speaking trumpet. Our poor fishermen, too, fared but badly in the little villages of the frith where they went to sell their fish. It was asserted, on the very best authority, by the villagers, that dead bodies were flung out every day over the sides of the quarantine vessels, and might be seen, bloated by the water, and tanned yellow by disease, drifting along the surface of the bay. Who could eat fish in such circumstances ? There was one person, indeed, who remarked to them, that he might perhaps venture on eating a haddock or whiting ; but no man in his senses, he said, would venture on eating a cod. He himself had once found a bunch of furze in the stomach of a

fish of this species, and what might that throat not contrive to swallow that had swallowed a bunch of furze? The very fishermen themselves added to the general terror by their wild stories. They were rowing homewards one morning, they said, in the grey uncertain light which precedes sunrise, along the rough edge of the northern Sutor, when, after doubling one of the rocky promontories which jut into the sea from beneath the crags of the hill, they saw a gigantic figure wholly attired in white, winding slowly along the beach. It was much taller than any man, or as Cowley would have perhaps described it, than the shadow of any man in the evening; and, at intervals, after gliding round the base of some inaccessible cliff, it would remain stationary for a few seconds, as if gazing wistfully upon the sea. No one who believed this apparition to be other than a wreath of vapour, entertained at the time the slightest doubt of its portending the visitation of some terrible pestilence, which was to desolate the country.

About eighty or a hundred years ago the port of Cromarty was occupied, as in 1831, by a fleet performing quarantine. Of course none of the townspeople recollected the circumstance; but a whole host of traditions connected with it, which had been imparted to them by their fathers, and had lain asleep in the recesses of some of their memories for a full half century, were awakened at this time, and sent wandering over the town, like so many ghosts. A crew of fishermen, it is said, either in ignorance or contempt of the quarantine laws, boarded one of the ves-

sels; and aboard were they compelled to remain for six tedious weeks, exposed to the double hardship of getting a great deal to drink and very little to eat. Another vessel entered the bay deeply laden but every morning, for the time she remained there, she was seen to sit lighter on the water, and when she quitted it on her return to Flushing, she had scarcely ballast enough aboard to render the voyage practicable. Gin and tobacco were rife in Cromarty for twelve months thereafter. A third vessel carried with her into the bay the disease to guard against which the quarantine had been established; and opposite the place where the fleet lately lay, there are a few little mounds on a patch of level sward, still known to children of the town as the Dutchmen's graves. About fifty years ago, when the present harbour of Cromarty was in building, a poor half witted man, one of the labourers employed in quarrying stone, was told one day by some of his companions, that a considerable sum of money had been deposited in this place with the bodies. In the evening he staid on some pretext in the quarry, until the other workmen had gone home, and then repairing to the graves, with his shovel and pick-axe, he laid one of them open; but, instead of the expected treasure, he found only human bones and wasted fragments of woollen cloth. Next morning he was seized by a putrid fever, and died a few days after. Miss Seward tells a story of quite a similar character in one of her letters; but in the case of the Cromarty labourer no person suffered from his imprudence except himself; whereas, in the one nar-

rated by Miss Seward, a malignant disease was introduced into a village, near which the graves were opened, which swept away seventy of the inhabitants.

In a central part of the church-yard of Nigg there is a rude undressed stone, near which the sexton never ventures to open a grave. A wild apocryphal tradition connects the erection of this stone with the times of the quarantine fleet. The plague, as the story goes, was brought to the place by one of the vessels, and was slowly flying along the ground, disengaged from every vehicle of infection, in the shape of a little yellow cloud. The whole country was alarmed, and groups of people were to be seen on every eminence, watching, with anxious horror, the progress of the little cloud. They were relieved, however, from their fears and the plague by a bold ingenious man of Nigg, whose name has ungratefully been suffered to die. This person having provided himself with an immense bag of linen, fashioned somewhat in the manner of a fowler's net, cautiously approached the yellow cloud, and, with a skill which could have owed nothing to practice, he succeeded in inclosing the whole of it in the bag. He then secured it by wrapping it up carefully, fold after fold, and fastening it down with pin after pin; and, when the linen was gradually changing, as if under the hands of the dyer, from white to yellow, he consigned it to the church-yard, where it has slept ever since:—But to our narrative.

The cholera was at length introduced into Britain, and shortly after into Ireland;—not, however, at any of the quarantine ports, but at places where scarcely any precautions had been taken to exclude it, or any

danger apprehended ; much in the manner that a beleaguered garrison is sometimes surprised at some unnoticed bastion, or untented angle, after the main points of attack have withstood the utmost efforts of the besiegers. It had previously been remarked that the disease traversed the various countries it visited, at nearly the same pace with the inhabitants. In Persia, where there is little trade, and neither roads nor canals to facilitate intercourse, it was a whole year in passing over a distance of somewhat less than three hundred leagues ; while among the more active people of Russia it performed a journey of seven hundred in less than six months. In Britain it travelled through the interior with the celerity of the mail, and voyaged along the coasts with the speed of the trading vessels ; and in a few weeks after its first appearance, it was ravaging the metropolis of England, and the southern shores of the Frith of Forth. It was introduced by some south country fishermen into the town of Wick, and a village of Sutherlandshire, in the month of July, 1832 ; and from the latter place, in the following August, into the fishing villages of the peninsula of Easter Ross. It visited Inverness, Nairn, Avoch, Dingwall, Urquhart, and Rosemarkie, a few weeks after.

I shall pass hurriedly over the sad story of its ravages. Were I to dwell on it to the extent of my information, and I know only a little, the reader might think I was misanthropically accumulating into one gloomy heap, all that is terrible in the judgements of God, and all that is mean and feeble in the character of man. The pangs of the rack, of the boot, of the

thumbscrew,—all that the Dominican or the savage has inflicted on the heretic or the white man, were realized in the tortures of this dreadful disease. Utter debility, intense thirst, excruciating cramps of the limbs, and an unimpaired intellect, were its chief characteristics. And the last was surely not the least terrible. Amid the ruins of the body, from which it was so soon to part, the melancholy spirit looked back upon the past with regret, and on the future with terror. Or even if amid its intense sufferings it “laid hold on the hope that faileth not ;” with what feelings must it have regarded the deserted cottage, when the friends on whom it had trusted proved unfaithful,—or, more melancholy still, on the affectionate wife or the dutiful child, struck down by the bed side in agonies as mortal as its own.

In the villages of Ross the disease assumed a more terrible aspect than it had yet presented in any other part of Britain. In the little village of Portmahomaek one fifth of the inhabitants were swept away ; in the still smaller village of Inver, one half. So abject was the poverty of the people, that, in some instances, there was not a candle in any house in a whole village ; and when the disease seized on the inmates in the night time, they had to grapple in darkness with its fierce pains and mortal terrors, and their friends, in the vain attempt to assist them, had to grope round their beds. Before morning they were, in most cases, beyond the reach of medicine. The infection spread with frightful rapidity. At Inver, though the population did not much exceed a hundred persons, eleven bodies were committed to the earth, without shroud

or coffin, in one day ; in two days after they had buried nineteen more. Many of the survivors fled from the village, and took shelter, some in the woods, some among the hollows of an extensive tract of sand hills. But the pest followed them to their hiding places, and they expired in the open air. Whole families were found lying dead on their cottage floors. In one instance, an infant, the only survivor, lay grovelling on the body of its mother,—the sole mourner in a charnel house of the pestilence. Rows of cottages, entirely divested of their inhabitants, were set on fire and burnt to the ground. The horrors of the times of Peter Walker were more than realized. Two young persons, a lad and his sister, were seen digging a grave for their father in the church-yard of Nigg ; and then carrying the corpse to it on a cart, no one venturing to assist them. The body of a man who died in a cottage beside the ferry of Cromarty, was borne to a hole, hurriedly scooped out of a neighbouring sand-bank, by his brother and his wife. During the whole of the preceding day, the unfortunate woman was seen from the opposite shore, flitting around the cottage like an unhappy ghost ;—during the whole of the preceding night had she watched alone by the dead. The coffin lay beside the door, the corpse in the middle of the apartment.—Never shall I forget the scene I witnessed from the old chapel of St. Regulus on the evening of the following Sabbath.

It was one of those lovely evenings which we so naturally associate with ideas of human enjoyment ;—when, from some sloping eminence, we look over the sunlit woods, and fields, and cottages of a wide

extent of country, and dream that the inhabitants are as happy as the scene is beautiful. The sky was without a cloud, and the sea without a wrinkle. The rocks and sand hills on the opposite shore lay glistening in the sun, each with its deep patch of shadow resting by its side ; and the effect of the whole, compared with the aspect it had presented a few hours before, was as if it had been raised on its ground work of sea and sky from the low to the high relief of the sculptor. There were boats drawn up on the beach, and a line of houses behind ;—but where were the inhabitants ? No smoke rose from the chimneys ; the doors and windows were fast closed ; not one solitary lounge sauntered about the harbour or the shore ; the fearful inanity of death and desertion pervaded the whole scene. Suddenly, however, the eye caught a little dark speck moving hurriedly along the road which leads to the ferry. It was a man on horseback. He reached the cottages of the boatmen, and flung himself from his horse ; but no one came at his call to row him across. He unloosed a skiff from her moorings, and set himself to tug at the oar. The skiff flew athwart the bay, The watchmen stationed on the shore of Cromarty moved down to prevent her landing. There was a loud cry passed from man to man ; a medical gentleman came running to the beach, he leapt into the skiff, and laying hold of an oar as if he were a common boatman, she again shot across the bay. A case of cholera had just occurred in the parish of Nigg. I never before felt so strongly the force of contrast. There is a short poem of the present age which presents the reader with a terrible picture of a

cloak of utter darkness spread over the earth, and the whole race of man perishing beneath its folds, like insects of Autumn in the chills of a night of October. There is another modern poem, less wild, but not less sublime, in which we see, as in the mirror of a magician, the sun dying in the heavens, and the evening of an eternal night closing around the last of our species. I trust I am able in some degree to appreciate the merits of both ; and yet, since witnessing the scene I have so feebly attempted to describe, I am led to think that the earth, if wholly divested of its inhabitants, would present a more melancholy aspect, should it still retain its fertility and beauty, than if wrapped up in a pall of darkness, surrounded by dead planets and extinguished suns.

CHAPTER XVI.

He sat upon a rock and bobbed for whale.

KENRICK.

ON the fourth Tuesday of November every year there is a kind of market held at Cromarty, which, for the last eighty years, has been gradually dwindling in importance ; and is now attended by only the children of the place, and a few elderly people, who supply them with toys and sweetmeats. Early in the last century, however, it was one of the most considerable in this part of the country ; and the circumstance of its gradual decline is curiously connected with the great change which has taken place since that period in the manners and habits of the people. It flourished as long as the Highlander legislated for himself and his neighbour on the good old principle so happily described by the poet,* and sunk into decay when he had flung down his broadsword, and become amenable to the laws of the kingdom. The town of Cromarty, as may be seen by consulting the map, is situated on the extremity of a narrow promontory, skirted on three of its

* For why, because the good old rule
Sufficeth them, the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can.

sides by the sea, and bordered on the fourth by the barren uninhabited waste described in a previous chapter. And though these are defects in the situation of a market of the present day,—which ought always to be held in some central point of the interior, that commands a wide circumference of country,—about a century ago they were positive advantages. It was an important circumstance that the merchants who attended the fair could convey their goods to it by sea, without passing through any part of the Highlands ; and the extent of moor which separated it by so broad a line from the seats of even the nearer clans, afforded them no slight protection when they had arrived at it. For further security the fair was held directly beneath the walls of the old castle, in the gorge of a deep, wooded ravine, which now forms part of the pleasure grounds of Cromarty House.

The progress of this market, from what it was once to what it is at present, was strongly indicative of several other curious changes which were taking place in the country.—The first achievement of commerce is the establishment of a market. In a semi-barbarous age the trader journeys from one district to another, and finds only, in a whole kingdom, that demand for his merchandise, which, when in an after period, civilisation has introduced her artificial wants among the people, may be found in a single province. So late as the year 1730, one solitary shopkeeper more than supplied the people of Cromarty with their few, every-day necessities of foreign manufacture or produce ;—I say more than supplied them, for in summer and autumn he travelled the country as a pedlar. For their occasional luxuries

and finery they trusted to the traders of the fair. Times changed, however, and the shopkeeper wholly supplanted the travelling merchant; but the fair continued to be frequented, till a later period, by another class of merchants, who dealt in various articles, the produce or manufacture of the country. Among these were a set of dealers who sold a kind of rude harness for horses and oxen, made of ropes, of hair and twisted birch; a second set who dealt in a kind of conical shaped carts, made of basket work; and a third who supplied the house builders of the period with split lath for thatched roofs and partitions. In time, however, the harness-maker, cart-wright, and house-carpenter of modern times, dealt by these artists as the shopkeeper had done by the fair merchant. The broguer or maker of Highland shoes kept the field in spite of the regular shoemaker, half a century later, and disappeared only about five years ago. The dealer in home-grown lint frequented it until last season; but the low wages, and sixteen-hour-per-day employment of the south country weaver, were gradually undermining his trade, and the steam loom seems to have given it its death blow.

Prior to the Revolution, and as late as the reign of Queen Anne, Cromarty drove a considerable trade in herrings. About the middle of July every year, immense bodies of this fish came swimming up the Moray Frith; and after they had spawned on a range of banks not more than eight miles from the town, quitted it for the main sea, in the beginning of September. In the better fishing seasons they filled the bays and creeks of the coast, swimming, in some instances, as

high as the ferries of Fowlis and Ardersier. There is a tradition that, shortly after the Union, a shoal of many hundred barrels pursued by a body of whales and porpoises, were stranded in a little bay of Cromarty, a few hundred yards to the east of the town. The beach was covered with them to the depth of several feet, and salt and casks failed the packers, when only an inconsiderable part of the shoal was cured. The residue was carried away for manure by the neighbouring farmers ; and so great was the quantity used in this way, and the stench they caused so offensive, that it was feared disease would have ensued. The season in which this took place is still spoken of as the "harst of the Herring-drove."

About thirty years ago some masons in digging a foundation in the eastern extremity of the town, discovered the site of a packing-yard of this period ; and threw out a quantity of scales, which glittered as bright as if they had been stripped from the fish only a few weeks before. Near this place, in the memory of men still living, there stood a little square building, two storeys in height, and with only a single room on each floor. The lower was dark and damp, and had the appearance of a cellar or storehouse ; the upper was lighted on three sides, and finished in a manner that shewed both the wealth and taste of the builder. A rich stucco cornice divided the walls from the ceiling. The former were neatly pannelled, the centre of the latter was occupied by a massy, circular pateras, round which a shoal of herrings, exquisitely relieved, were swimming in a sea of plaster. This building was the cellar and counting-room of Urquhart of Greenhill, a

rich herring merchant and landed proprietor, and a descendant of the old Urquharts of Cromarty.

In a fishing season late in this period, two men of the place who, like most of the other inhabitants, were both trades-folks and fishermen, were engaged one morning in discussing the merits of an anker of Hollands which had been landed from a Dutch lugger a few evenings before. They nodded to each other across the table with increasing heartiness and good will, until, at length, their heads almost met; and, as quaich after quaich was alternately emptied and replenished, they began to find that the contents of the anker were best nearest the bottom. They were interrupted, however, before they had fully ascertained the fact, by the women of the house tapping at the window, and calling them out to see something extraordinary; and, on going to the door, they saw a whole plump of whales blowing, and tumbling, and pursuing one another in a long line up the bay. A sudden thought struck one of the men: "It would be gran fun, Charlie, man," said he, addressing his companion, to hook one o' yon chields on Nannie Fizzle's crook." "Ay, if we had but bait," rejoined the other; "but here's a gay fresh codling on Nannie's hake, an' the yawl lies on the tap o'the fu sea." The crook, a chain about six feet in length, with a hook at one end, and a large ring at the other, and which, when in its proper place, hung in Nannie's chimney to suspend her pots over the fire, was accordingly baited with the cod, and fastened to a rope; and the two men, tumbling into their yawl, rowed out to the *cossmee*. Like the giant of the epigram, they sat bobbing for whale; but the

plump had gone high up the frith ; and, too impatient to wait its return, they hollowed to a friend to row out his skiff for them ; and, leaving their own at anchor with the crook hanging over the stern, they returned to Nannie Fizzle's ; where they soon forgot both the yawl and the whales.

They were not long, however, in being reminded of them. A person came bellowing to the window, " Charlie, Willie, the yawl ! the yawl ! and, on staggering out, they saw the unfortunate yawl darting down the frith with twice the velocity of a king's cutter in a fresh breeze. Ever and anon she would dance, and wheel, and plunge, and then shoot off in a straight line. One of the whales had swallowed the crook. The little skiff was launched and manned ; but the Hollands had done its work ; one of the poor fellows tumbled over the thaft, the other snapped his oar ;—all was confusion. Luckily, however, the rope fastened to the crook broke at the ring ; and the yawl, after gradually losing way, began to drift towards the shore. The adventure was bruited all over the town ; and every one laughed at the whale-fishers except Nannie Fizzle, who was inconsolable for the loss of her crook.

It was ramoured a few weeks after, that the carcass of a whale had been cast ashore in the frith of Beaul, near Redcastle, and the two fishermen set off together to the place, in the hope of identifying the carcass with the fish in which they had encoffed themselves at the expense of Nannie Fizzle. The day of the journey chanced to be also that of a Redcastle market ; and, as they approached the place, they were

encountered by parties of Highlanders hurrying to the fair. Most of them had heard of the huge fish, but none of them of the crook. When the Cromarty men came up to the carcass, they found it surrounded by half the people of the fair, who were gazing, and wondering, and pacing it from head to tail, and poking at it with sticks and broadswords. "It is our property every inch," said one of the men, coming forward to the fish, "we hooked it three weeks ago on the *coss-mee*, but it broke off; and we have now come here to take possession. It carried away our tackle, a chain and a hook. Lend me your dirk, honest man," he continued, addressing a Highlander, "we shall cut it out, and make good our claim." "O ay, nae doubt," said the Highlander, as he obligingly handed him the weapon; "but och, its no me that would like to eat her, for she maun be a filthy meat." The crowd pressed round to witness the dissection, which ended on the Cromarty man pulling out the crook from among the entrails, and holding it up in triumph. "Did I no tell you," he exclaimed, "the fish is ours beyond dispute." "Then," said a smart looking little pedlar, who had just joined the throng, "ye have made the best o' this day's market. I'se warrant your fishing worth a the plaiding sold to-day." The Highlanders stared. "For what is it worth," asked a tacksman of the place. "Oh look there, look there," replied the pedlar, tapping the blubber with his elwand, "ulzie clear as usquebaugh. I'se be bound it's as richly worth four hunder pund Scots, as ony twa stans on the fair." This piece of mischievous information entirely

altered the circumstances of the case as it regarded the two fishermen ; for the tacksman laid claim to the fish on his own behalf and the laird's ; and, as he could back his arguments with a full score of broadswords, the men were at length fain to content themselves with being permitted to carry away with them Nannie Fizzle's crook.

The mishap of the whale fishers was followed by a much greater mishap,—the total failure of the herring fishery. The herring is one of the most eccentric little fishes that frequents our seas. For many years together it visits regularly in its season some particular frith or bay ;—fishing villages spring up on the shores, harbours are built for the reception of vessels ; and the fisherman and merchant calculate on their usual quantum of fish, with as much confidence as the farmer on his average quantum of grain. At length, however, there comes a season, as mild and pleasant as any that have preceded it, in which the herring does not visit the frith. On each evening the fisherman casts out his nets on the accustomed bank, on each morning he draws them in again, but with all the meshes as brown and open as when he flung them out ; in the following season he is equally unsuccessful ; and ere the shoal returns to its accustomed haunts, the harbour has become a ruin, and the village a heap of green mounds. It happened thus late in the reign of Queen Anne, with the herring trade of the Moray Frith. After a busy and successful fishing, the shoal, as usual, left the frith in a single night ; preparations were made for the ensuing season ; the

season came, but not the herrings ; and for more than half a century from this time, Cromarty derived scarcely any benefit from its herring fishery.

My townsfolks in this age,—an age in which every extraordinary effect was coupled with a supernatural cause, were too ingenious to account for the failure of the trade, by a simple reference to the natural history of the herring ; and two stories relating to it still survive, which shew them to have been strangely acute in rendering a reason, and not a little credulous in forming a belief. Great quantities of fish had been caught and brought ashore on a Saturday ; and the packers continued to work during the night ; yet, on the Sunday morning, much still remained to be done. The weather was sultry, and the fish were becoming soft ; and as the work was deemed one of necessity, the minister of the parish did not hinder them from going on with it throughout the Sabbath. Towards evening he paid them a visit ; and as they had been prevented from attending church, he made them a short serious address. They soon, however, became impatient ; the diligent began to work, the mischievous to pelt him with filth ; and the good man abruptly concluded his exhortation by praying that the besom of judgement would come and sweep every herring out of the frith. On the following Monday, the boats went to sea as usual, but returned empty ; on the Tuesday they were not more successful ; and it was concluded that the shoal had gone off for the season ; but it proved not for the season merely ; for another and another came, and still no herrings were caught. In short, the prayer, as the story goes, was so fully

answered, that none of the unlucky packers witnessed the return of the shoal.

The other, a still wilder story, accounts for its flight in a different manner. Tradition, who is even a more credulous naturalist than historian, affirms that herrings have a strong antipathy to human blood, especially when spilt in a quarrel. On the last day of the fishing, the nets belonging to two boats became entangled; the crew that first hauled applied the knife to their neighbours' baulks and meshes, and with little trouble or damage to themselves, succeeded in unravelling their own. A quarrel was the consequence; and one of the ancient modes of naval warfare, the only one eligible in their circumstances, was resorted to. They fought leaning over the gunwales of their respective boats. Blood was spilt, unfortunately spilt in the sea; the affronted herrings took their departure, and for more than half a century, were not the cause in even the remotest degree, of any quarrel which took place on the Moray Frith or its shores. One of the combatants, who distinguished himself either by doing or suffering in this unlucky fray, bore ever after the designation of the "bloody;" and there are men still living who remember to have seen him.

The failure of the herring trade was followed by that of Urquhart of Greenhill. He is said to have been a shrewd industrious man, of great force of character, and admirably fitted by nature and habit, had he lived in better times, to have restored the dilapidated fortunes of his house. During the reign of William, he was adding ship to ship, and field to field,

until about the year 1700, when he was possessed of nearly of one-half the lands of the parish, and of no fewer than five three-masted vessels, besides others of a smaller size. But it was his lot to speculate in an unfortunate age ; and having, with all the other merchants of Scotland, suffered severely from the Union, the failure of the herring fishery completed his ruin. He sunk by inches ; striving to the very last, with a proud heart and a bitter spirit, against the evils which assailed him. All his ships were at length either knocked down by the hammer of the auctioneer, or broken up by the maul of the carpenter, except one ; and this one, when returning homewards from some port of the continent, was driven ashore in a violent night storm on the rocky coast of Cadboll, and beaten to pieces before morning. It was with difficulty the crew was saved. One of them, a raw young fellow, a much better herdsman than sailor, escaped to his friends, full of the wild scenes he had just witnessed ; and set himself to relate to them the particulars of his voyage ;—it was his first and his last. Smooth water and easy sailing may be delineated in common language ; he warmed, however, as the narrative proceeded. He described the gathering of the tempest, the darkening of the night, the dashing of the waves, the howling of the winds, and the rolling of the vessel ; but being unfortunately no master of climax, language failed him in the concluding scene, where there were rocks, and breakers, and midnight darkness, and a huge ship wallowing in foam, like a wounded boar in the toils of the hunters. “ Oh ! ” exclaimed the sailor herdsman, “ I can think o’ nae likening to that

puir ship, and the awfu' erags, and awfu' jaws, except the nowt i' the byre, when they break their fastenings i' the mirk night, and rout and gore, and rout and gore, till the verra roof tree shakes wi' the brattle." I do not know what the people of the present age may think of the comparison, but I can assure them, it was deemed a piece of very excellent humour in the good year 1712. Greenhill's remark, when informed of the disaster, had more of philosophy in it, "A weel," said he, taking a deliberate pinch of snuff, and then handing the box to his informant, "I have lang wars-tled wi' the warld, and fain would I have got on the tap o't; but I may be just as weel as I am. Diel haet can harm me now, if Macleod, honest man, doesna put me to the law for dinting the Swallow against the march-stanes o' Cadboll."

One other passage relating to this branch of the family of the Urquharts, and I have done. It has produced in a lady of Aberdeenshire, one of the most pleasing poetesses of our age or country;—not, however, one of the most celebrated. Her exquisite little pieces, combining with singular felicity the simplicity and pathos of the old ballad with the refinement and elegance of our classical poets, have been flung as carelessly into the world as the rich plumes of the birds of the tropics on the plains and forests of the south. But they have not lain altogether unnoticed. The nameless little foundlings have been picked out from among the crowd, and introduced into the best company on the score of merit alone.—The genealogist was of a very different spirit from his relative; he would have inscribed his name on the face of the sun,

could he have but climbed to it ;—but may not there be something to regret in even the more amiable extreme. The prophecies of that sibyl who committed her writings to the loose leaves of the forest, were lost to the world on the first slight breeze. I present the reader with a pleasing little poem of this descendant of the Urquharts, in which, though perhaps not one of the most finished of her pieces, he will find something better than mere finish. It may not be quite new to him, having found its way into Macdiarmid's Scrap-Book, and several other collections of merit ; but he may peruse it with fresh interest, as the production of a relative of Sir Thomas, who seems to have inherited all his genius, undebased by any mixture of his eccentricity.

ON HEARING A LIVELY PIECE OF MUSIC,

“ THE WATERLOO WALTZ.”

A moment pause, ye British fair,
 While pleasure's phantom ye pursue,
 And say if dance and sprightly air
 Suit with the name of Waterloo.
 Dearly bought the victory,
 Chasten'd should the triumph be ;
 Midst the laurels she has won,
 Britain weeps for many a son.

Veil'd in clouds the morning rose,
 Nature seem'd to mourn the day,
 Which consign'd before its close
 Thousands to their kindred elay.
 How unfit for courtly ball,
 Or the giddy festival,
 Was the grim and ghastly view,
 Ere evening closed on Waterloo.

See the Highland warrior rushing,
First in danger, on the foe,
Till the life blood, stemless gushing,
Lays the plaided hero low.
His native pipe's heart thrilling sound,
Mid war's infernal concert drown'd,
Cannot sooth his last adieu,
Nor wake his sleep on Waterloo.

Crashing o'er the cuirassier,
See the foaming charger flying,
Trampling in his wild career,
All alike, the dead and dying.
See the bullets pierce his side,
See, amid a crimson tide,
Helmet, horse, and rider too,
Roll on bloody Waterloo.

Shall sights like these the dance inspire,
Or wake the jocund notes of mirth !
Oh, shiver'd be the recreant lyre,
That gave the base idea birth !
Other sounds, I ween, were there,
Other music rent the air,
Other *Waltz* the warriors knew,
When they closed at Waterloo.

Forbear, till time with lenient hand,
Has heal'd the wounds of recent sorrow,
And let the picture distant stand,
The softening hue of years to borrow.
When our race has pass'd away,
Hands unborn may wake the lay,
And give to joy alone the view,
Of victory at Waterloo.

CHAPTER XVII.

He whom my restless gratitude has sought
So long in vain.

THOMSON.

EARLY in the month of April 1734, three Cromarty boatmen, connected with the Customhouse, were journeying along the miserable road which at this period winded between the capital of the Highlands and that of the kingdom. They had already travelled since morning more than thirty miles through the wild Highlands of Inverness-shire, and were now toiling along the steep side of an uninhabited valley of Badenoch. A dark sluggish morass, with a surface as level as a sheet of water, occupied the bottom of the valley : a few scattered tufts of withered grass were mottled over it, but the unsolid, sooty-coloured spaces between were as bare of vegetation as banks of sea-mud left by the receding tide. On either hand, a series of dreary mountains thrust up their jagged and naked summits into the middle sky. A scanty covering of heath was thrown over their bases, except where the frequent streams of loose *debris* which had fallen from above, were spread over them. Higher up, the heath altogether disappeared, and the eye rested on what seemed an endless file of bare gloomy cliffs, partially covered with snow.

The evening, for day was fast drawing to a close, was as melancholy as the scene. A dense volume of grey clouds were spread over the valley like a ceiling, and seemed descending along the cliffs,—some of the loftiest had already disappeared. There was scarcely any wind, but at times a wreath of vapour would come rolling into a lower region of the valley, as if shot out from the volume above; and the thin bleak air was filled with small specks of snow, so light and fleecy, that they seemed scarcely to descend, but, when caught by the half perceptible breeze, went sailing past the boatmen in long horizontal lines. It was evident there impended over them one of those terrible snow storms which sometimes overwhelm the hapless traveller in these solitudes;—the house in which they were to pass the night was still nearly ten miles away.

The gloom of evening, deepened by the coming storm, was closing around them as they entered one of the wildest recesses of the valley, an immense precipitous hollow scooped out of the side of one of the hills; the wind began to howl through the cliffs, and the thickening flakes of snow to beat against their faces. “It will be a terrible night, lads, in the Moray Frith,” said the foremost traveller, a broad-shouldered, deep-chested, strong-looking man, of about five feet eight; “I would ill like to hae to beat up through the drift along the rough shores o’ Cadboll. It was in just such a night as this, ten year ago, that old Walter Hogg went down in the Red Sally.”—“It will be as terrible a night, I’m feared, just where we are in the black strath o’ Badenoch,” said one of the men behind, who seemed much fatigued; “I wish

we were a' safe i' the clachan."—"Hoot, man," said Sandy Wright, the first speaker, "it canna now be muckle mair nor sax miles afore us, an' we'll hae the tail o' the gloamin for half an hour yet. But, gude safe us ! what's that ?" he exclaimed, pointing to a little figure that seemed sitting by the side of the road, about twenty yards before him ; "it's surely a fairy." The figure rose from its seat, and came up, staggering, apparently from extreme weakness, to meet them. It was a boy scarcely more than ten years of age. "O my puir boy," said Sandy Wright, "what can hae taken ye here in a night like this ?"—"I was going to Edinburgh to my friends," replied the boy, "for my mother died and left me among the *freme* ; but I'm tired, tired, and canna walk farther ; and I'll be lost, I'm feared, in the *yowndrift*."—"That ye winna, my puir bairn," said the boatman, "if I can help it ; 'gi'es a hand o' your han'," grasping, as he spoke, the extended hand of the boy, "dinna tine heart, an' lean on me as muckle's ye can." But the poor little fellow was already exhausted, and, after a vain attempt to proceed, the boatman had to carry him on his back. The storm burst out in all its fury ; and the travellers, half suffocated and more than half blinded, had to grope onwards along the rough road, still more roughened by the snow-wreaths that were gathering over it. They stopped at every fiercer blast, and turned their backs to the storm to recover breath ; and every few yards they advanced, they had to stoop to the earth to ascertain the direction of their path, by catching the outline of the nearer objects between them and the sky. After many a stumble and fall,

however, and many a groan and exclamation from the two boatmen behind, who were wellnigh worn out, they all reached the clachan in safety about two hours after nightfall.

The inmates were seated round an immense peat fire, placed, according to the custom of the country, in the middle of the floor. They made way for the travellers ; and Sandy Wright, drawing his seat nearer the fire, began to chaff the hands and feet of the boy, who was almost insensible from cold and fatigue. " Bring us a mutchkin o' brandy here," said the boatman, " to drive out the cauld fra our hearts ; an', as supper canna be ready for a while yet, get me a piece for the boy. He has had a narrow escape, puir little fellow ; an' may be there's some that would miss him, lanerly as he seems. Only hear how the win' roars on the gable, an' rattles at the winnocks and the door. O ! it's an awfu' night in the Moray Frith."

" It's no gude," continued the boatman, as he tendered a half glass of the brandy and a cake of bread to his *protégé*, " it's no gude to be ill to boys. My own loon, Willie, that's the liftenant now, learned me a lesson o' that. He was a wild roytous laddie, fu' o' droll mischief, an' desperately fond o' cocks, doos, an' rabbits. He had a doo's nest out in the Crook-burn Wood ; but he was muckle in the dread o' fighting Rob Moffat, the gamekeeper ; and, on the day it was ripe for harrying, what did he do but set himself to watch Rob, at his house at the Mains. He saw him setting off to the hill, as he thought, wi' his gun an' his twa dogs ; an' then awa sneaks he to the burn, thinking himsel out o' Rob's danger. He could

climb like a cat, an' so up he clamb to the nest, an' then wi' his bonnet in his teeth, an' the twa doos in his bonnet, he drapped down fra branch to branch ; but what would ye think ! the first thing he met at the bottom was muckle Rob. The cankered, quarrelsome wretch raged like a perfect madman, an' laying hold on the twa birds by the feet, he dawdled them about Willie's face, till they were baith massacred. It was an ill-hearted cruel thing ; an', had I been there, I would hae tauld him sae on the deafest side o' his head, lang though he be. Willie came hame wi' his chaffs a' swelled an' bluidy, an' the greet, puir chield, in his throat, for he was as muckle vexed as hurt. He was but a thin slip o' a callant at the time ; but he had a high spirit, an', just out o' the healey, awa he went in young Captain Robinson's lugger, an' did na come near the place, though he sent his mither pennies now an' then by the Campvere traders, for about five years. Weel, back he came at last, a stalwart young fallow o' sax feet, wi' a grip that would spin the bluid out at the craps o' a chield's fingers ; an', O, we were a' glad to see him ! ' Mither,' said he, ' is fighting Rob Moffat at the Mains yet ? ' ' O, ay,' quo' she. ' Weel, then, I think I'll call on him in the morning,' says he, ' an' clear aff an old score wi' him,' an' his face grew black as he spoke. We baith kent what was working wi' him ; an', after bedtime, his mither, puir body, gied up a' the length o' the Mains to warn Rob to keep out o' the way. An' weel did he do that, for for the three weeks that Willie staid at hame wi' us, not a bit o'

him was to be seen at either kirk or market.—Puir Willie ! he has got fighting enough sinsyne.”

Sandy Wright shared with the boy his supper and his bed ; and, on setting out on the following morning, he brought him along with him, despite the remonstrances of the other boatmen, who dreaded his proving an incumbrance. The story of the little fellow, though simple, was very affecting. His mother, a poor widow, had lived, for the five preceding years, in the vicinity of Inverness, supporting herself and her boy by her skill as a sempstress. As early as his sixth year, he had shown a predilection for reading ; and, with the anxious solicitude of a Scottish mother, she had wrought late and early to keep him at school. But her efforts were above her strength, and, after a sore struggle of nearly four years, she at length sunk under them. “ Oh,” said the boy to his companion, “ often would she stop in the middle of her work, and lay her hand on her breast, and then she would ask me what would I do when she would be dead,—and we would both greet. Her fingers grew white and sma’, and she couldna sit up at nights as before ; but her cheeks were redder and bonnier than ever, and I thought that she surely wouldna die. She has told me, that she was’na eighteen years older than mysel. Often, often when I waukened in the morning, she would be greetin at my bedside ; and I mind one day, when I brought home the first prize from school, that she drew me till her, an’ told me wi’ the tear in her e’e, that the day would come, when her head would be low, that my father’s gran’ friends, who were

ashamed o' her because she was poor, would be proud that I was connected wi' them. She soon couldna hold up her head at all, and if it wasna for a neighbour woman, who hadna muckle to spare, we would have starved. I couldna go to the school, for I needed to stay and watch by her bedside, and do things in the house ; and it vexed her more that she was keeping me from my learning, than that hersel was sae ill. But I used to read chapters to her out of the Bible. One day when she was sick, sick, two neighbour women came in, and she called me to her and told me that when she would be dead, I would need to go to Edinburgh, for I had no friends any where else. Her own friends were there, she said, but they were poor and couldna do muckle for me ; and my father's friends were there too, and they were gran' and rich, though they wadna own her. She told me no to be feared by the way, for that Providence kent every bit o't, and He would make folk to be kind to me ; and then she kissed me, and grat, and bade me go to the school. When I came out she was lying wi' a white cloth on her face, and the bed was all white. She was dead, dead, and I could do nothing but greet a' that night, and she was dead still. I'm now travelling to Edinburgh, as she bade me, and folk are kind to me just as she said ; and I have letters to show me the way to my mither's friends when I reach the town, for I can read write." Such was the narrative of the poor boy.

Throughout the whole of the journey, Sandy Wright was as a father to him. He shared with him his meals and his bed, and usually for the last half dozen

miles of every stage, he carried him on his back. On reaching the Queensferry, however, the boatman found that his money was wellnigh expended. I must just try and get him across, thought he, without paying the fare. The boat had reached the middle of the ferry, when one of the ferrymen, a large gruff-looking fellow, began to collect the freight. He passed along the passengers one after one, and made a dead stand at the boy. "Oh," said Sandy Wright, who sat by him, "dinna stop at the boy;—it's a puir orphan; see, here's my groat." The ferryman still held out his hand. "It's a puir orphan," reiterated the boatman, "we found him bewildered on the bursting out o' the last storm, in a dismal habitless glen o' Badenoch, an' taen him wi' us a' the way; for he's going to seek his friends at Edinburgh; surely ye'll no grudge him a passage." The ferryman, without deigning him a reply, plucked off the boy's bonnet, the boatman instantly twitched it out of his hand. "Hoot, hoot, hoot," he exclaimed, "the puir fatherless and motherless boy!—ye'll no do that. Take tent, my man," he added, for the ferryman seemed doggedly resolved on exacting the hire, "take tent; we little ken what may come o' oursels yet, forby our bairns." "By ——, boatman, or whatever ye be," said the ferryman, "I'll hae either the fare or the fare's worth, though it should be his jacket;" and he again laid hold on the boy, who began to cry. Sandy Wright rose from his seat in a towering passion. "Look ye, my man," said he, as he seized him by the collar, with a grasp that would have pulled a bull to the ground, "little hauds me from pitching ye out o'er the gunwale. Only

crack a finger on the poor thing, an' I'll knock ye down, man, though ye were as muckle as a bullock. Shame, shame ye for a man,—ye hae nae mair natural feeling than a sealchies bubble.”* The cry of shame, shame, was echoed from the other passengers, and the surly ferryman gave up the point.

“An' now, my boy,” said the boatman, as they reached the head of what is now Leith Walk, “I hae business to do at the Customhouse, an' some money to get ; but I maun first try and find out your friends for ye. Look at the letters an' tell me the street an' the number where they put up.” The boy untied his little bundle, which contained a few shirts and stockings, a parcel of papers, and a small box.—“What's a' the papers about ?” enquired the boatman, “an' what hae ye in the wee box ?” “My mither,” said the boy, “bade me be sure to keep the papers, for they tell of her marriage to my father ; and the box hands her wedding ring. She could have got money for it when she was sick and no able to work, but she would sooner starve, she said, than part wi' it ; and I widna like to part wi' it either, to ony bodie but yoursel,—but if ye would take it ?” He opened the box and passed it to his companion. It contained a valuable diamond ring. “No, no, my boy,” said the boatman, “that widna do ; the ring's a bonny ring, an' something bye ordinar, though I be no judge ; but, blessings on your heart ! tak ye care o't, an' part wi't on no account to ony bodie ;—Hae ye found out the direction ?” The

* Sea-nettle.

boy named some place in the vicinity of the Grass-market, and in a few minutes they were both walking up the High Street.

“O, yonder’s my aunt,” exclaimed the boy, pointing to a young woman who was coming down the street; “yonder’s my mither’s sister; and away he sprung to meet her. She immediately recognised and welcomed him; and he introduced the boatman to her, as the kind friend who had rescued him from the snow-storm and the ferryman. She related in a few words the story of the boy’s parents. His father had been a dissipated young man of good family, whose follies had separated him from his friends; and the difference he had rendered irreconcilable by marrying a low born but industrious and virtuous young woman, who, despite of her birth, was deserving of a better husband. In a few years he had sunk into indigence and contempt; and, in the midst of a wretchedness, which would have been still more complete had it not been for the efforts of his wife, he was seized by a fever of which he died. “Two of his brothers,” said the woman, “who are gentlemen of the law, were lately enquiring about the boy, and will, I hope, interest themselves in his behalf.” In this hope the boatman cordially acquiesced. “An’ now, my boy,” said he, as he bade him farewell, “I have just one groat left yet;—here it is; better in your pocket than wi’ the gruff carle at the ferry. It’s an honest groat any how; an’ I’m sure I wish it luck.”

Eighteen years elapsed before Sandy Wright again visited Edinburgh. He had quitted it a robust, powerful man of forty-seven, and he returned to it a grey-

headed old man of sixty-five. His humble fortunes, too, were sadly in the wane. His son, William, a gallant young fellow, who had risen in a few years on the score of merit alone, from the forecastle to a lieutenancy, had headed, under Admiral Vernon, some desperate enterprize, from which he never returned : and the boatman himself, when on the eve of retiring on a small pension, from his long service in the Customhouse, was dismissed without a shilling, on the charge of having connived at the escape of a smuggler. He was slightly acquainted with one of the inferior clerks in the Edinburgh Customhouse ; and, in the slender hope that this person might use his influence in his behalf, and that that influence might prove powerful enough to get him reinstated, he had now travelled from Cromarty to Edinburgh, a weary journey of nearly two hundred miles. He had visited the clerk, who had given him scarcely any encouragement, and he was now waiting for him in a street near George's Square, where he had promised to meet him in less than half an hour. But more than two hours had elapsed ; and Sandy Wright, fatigued and melancholy, was sauntering slowly along the street, musing on his altered circumstances, when a gentleman, who had passed him with the quick hurried step of a person engaged in business, stopped abruptly a few yards away, and returning at a much slower pace, eyed him steadfastly as he repassed. He again came forward and stood. " Are you not Mr. Wright ?" he enquired. " My name, sir, is Sandy Wright," said the boatman, touching his bonnet. The face of the stranger glowed with pleasure, and grasping him by the hand, " Oh,

my good kind friend Sandy Wright !” he exclaimed, “ often, often have I enquired after you, but no one could tell me where you resided, or whether you were living or dead. Come along with me ;—my house is in the next square. What ! not remember me ; ah, but it will be ill with me when I cease to remember you. I am Hamilton, an advocate,—but you will scarcely know me as that.”

The boatman accompanied him to an elegant house in George’s Square, and was ushered into a splendid apartment, where there sat a Madonna-looking young lady engaged in reading. “ Who of all the world have I found,” said the advocate to the lady, “ but good Sandy Wright, the kind brave man who rescued me when perishing in the snow, and who was so true a friend to me when I had no friend besides.” The lady welcomed the boatman with one of her most fascinating smiles, and held out her hand. “ How happy I am,” she said, “ that we should have met with you. Often has Mr. Hamilton told me of your kindness to him, and regretted that he should have no opportunity of acknowledging it.” The boatman made one of his best bows, but he had no words for so fine a lady.

The advocate enquired kindly after his concerns, and was told of his dismissal from the Customhouse. “ I’ll vouch,” he exclaimed, “ it was for nothing an honest man should be ashamed of.”—“ Oh, only a slight matter, Mr. Hamilton,” said the boatman, “ an’ troth, I couldna weel do other than what I did though I should hae to do’t o’er again. Captain Robinson o’ the Free Trade was on the coast o’ Cadboll last harst,

about the time o' the *Equinoxal*, unlading a cargo o' Hollands, whan on came the storm, an' he had to run for Cromarty to avoid shipwreck. His loading was mostly out, except a few orra kegs that might just make his lugger seizable if folk gied a wee owre strict. If he could but show, however, that he had been at the Isle o' Mann, an' had been forced into the Frith by mere stress o' weather, fra his even course to Flushing, it would set him clear out o' our danger. I had a strong liking to the Captain, for he had been unco kind to my poor Willie, that's dead now ; an' when he tauld our officer that he had been at Mann, an' the officer asked for proof, I contrived to slide twa Manks baubees intil his han', an' he held them out till him just in a careless way, as if he had plenty proof besides. Weel, this did, an' the puir chield wan off ; but hardly was he down the Frith, when out came the hail story. Him they couldna harm, but me they could ; an', after muckle ill words, (an' I had to bear them a', for I'm an auld failed man now,) instead o' getting retired on a pension for my forty years' service, I was turned aff without a shilling. I have an acquaintance in the Customhouse here, Mr. Scrabster the clerk, an' I came up ance errand to Edinburgh in the hope that he might do something for me ; but he's no verra able I'm thinking, an' I'm feared no verra willing ; an' so, Mr. Hamilton, I just canna help it. My day, o' course o' nature, canna be verra lang, an' Providence, that has aye carried me through as yet, winna surely let me stick now."—"Ah, no, my poor friend," said the advocate. "Make up your mind,

however, to stay for a few weeks with Helen and me, and I shall try in the meantime what my little influence will do for you at the Customhouse."

A fortnight passed away very agreeably to the boatman. Mrs. Hamilton, a fascinating young creature of very superior mental endowments, was quite delighted with his character and his stories:—the latter opened to her a new chapter in her favourite volume—the book of human life; and the advocate, a man of high talent and a benevolent heart, seemed to regard him with the feelings of an affectionate son. At length, however, he began to weary sadly of what he termed the life of a gentleman, and to sigh after his little smoky cottage, and "the pair auld wife." "Just remain with us one week longer," said the advocate, "and I shall learn in that time the result of my application. You are not now quite so active a man as when you carried me ten miles through the snow, and frightened the tall ferryman, and so I shall secure for you a passage in one of the Leith traders." In a few days after, when the boatman was in the middle of one of his most interesting stories, and Mrs. Hamilton hugely delighted, the advocate entered the apartment, his eyes beaming with pleasure, and a packet in his hand. "This is from London," he said, as he handed it to the lady; "it intimates to us, that one Alexander Wright, a Customhouse boatman, is to retire from the service on a pension of twenty pounds per annum."—But why dwell longer on the story? Sandy Wright parted from his kind friends, and returned to Cromarty, where he died in the spring of 1769, in the

82d year of his age. "Folk hae aye to learn," he used to say, "an', for my own part, I was a saxty year auld scholar afore I kent the meaning o' the verse,—'Cast thy bread on the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days.'"

CHAPTER XVIII.

I'll give thee a wind.

SHAKSPEARE.

FOR about thirty years after the failure of the herring fishery, the population of the town of Cromarty gradually decreased. Many of the young men became sailors and went into foreign parts, from whence few of them returned. One of them served in the unfortunate expedition of Vernon, and left his bones under the walls of Carthagera ; another, after sailing round the world with Anson, died on his passage homewards, when within sight of the white cliffs of England ; a third was barbarously murdered on the high seas by the notorious Captain James Lowrie. Such of the townspeople as had made choice of the common mechanical professions, plied their respective trades in the fishing towns of the north of Scotland ; and I have seen, among old family papers, letters of these emigrants written from Lerwick, Kirkwall, and Stornaway. As the population gradually decreased in this way, house after house became tenantless and fell into decay ; until the main street was skirted by roofless tenements, and the town's cross, which bears date 1578, was bounded by a stone wall on the one side, and a hawthorn hedge on the other.

The domestic economy of the people, who still continued to inhabit the town, differed considerably from what it had been when their circumstances were more prosperous. There was now no just division of labour among them,—working people of all the different denominations encroaching each on the bounds of the others' profession. Fishermen wrought as labourers, tradesfolks as fishermen, and both as farmers. In the latter part of spring and the two first months of summer, the townspeople spent their evenings in angling, with rods and hand-lines, in their boats, or from the rocks at the entrance of the bay ; towards the end of July, they formed themselves into parties of eight or ten persons, and sailed to Tarbet-Ness, a fishing station of the Moray Frith, where they remained for several weeks storing up fish for winter. At night they converted their sails into tents, ranged in the manner of an encampment, at the edge of the little bay where they moored their boats.

The long, low promontory of Tarbat Ness, forms the north-eastern extremity of Ross-shire. Etymologists derive its name from the practice which prevailed among mariners in this country, during the infancy of navigation, of drawing their light shallops across the necks of such promontories, instead of sailing round them. On a moor of this headland may be traced the vestiges of an encampment, which some deem Roman, and others Danish ; and there is a cave among the low rocks by which it is skirted, which, according to tradition, communicates with another cave on the coast of Caithness. The scenery of Tarbat Ness is of that character which Addison deemed the

most sublime ; but it has something more to recommend it than a mere expansiveness, in which no object, tree, house, or mountain, contracts the view of the vast arch of heaven, or the huge circle of earth. Instead of a low plain, bounded by the sky, there is here a wide expanse of ocean encircling a narrow headland,—brown, sterile, solitary, edged with rock, and studded with fragments of stone. On the one hand, the mountains of Sutherland are seen rising out of the sea like a volume of blue clouds ; on the other, at a still greater distance, the hills of Moray stretch along the horizon, in a long undulating strip, so faintly defined in the outline, that they seem almost to mingle with the firmament. Instead, however, of contracting the prospect, they serve as a scale to measure the immense space in which they are included. Space, —wide, measureless, interminable space, in which he who contemplates it finds himself lost, and is oppressed by a sense of his own littleness, is at all times the circumstance to which the scene owes most of its power ; but it is only during the storms of winter, when the firmament in all its vastness seems converted into a hall of the tempest, and the earth, in all its extent, into a gymnasium for contending elements, that the scene assumes its full sublimity and grandeur. On the north a chain of alternate currents and whirlpools howl, and bellow, and toss, and rage, as if wrestling with the hurricane ; on the east the huge waves of the German ocean come rolling against the rocky barrier, encircling it with a broad line of foam, and joining their voices of thunder to the roar of current and whirlpool ; cloud after cloud sweeps along

the brown promontory, flinging on it their burdens as they pass ; the sea-gull shrieks over it as he beats his wings against the gale ; the distant hills seem blotted from the landscape ; occasionally a solitary bark, half enveloped in cloud and spray, with its dark sails furled to the yards, and its topmasts lowered to the deck, comes drifting over the foam ; and the mariner, anxious, afraid, and tied to the helm, looks wistfully over the waves for the headlands of the distant haven.

A party of Cromarty tradesfolks, who had prosecuted the fishing on the promontory of Tarbat Ness, for part of the summer and autumn of 1738, had been less successful that season than most of their neighbours, and they had lingered for several days on the station, after the tents of the encampment had been struck, and the boats had sailed for home. At length, however, a day was fixed for their return, but when it arrived the wind had set in strongly from the southwest ; and, instead of prosecuting their voyage, they were compelled to haul up their boat to the site of the encampment. The storm continued for more than two weeks, accompanied by heavy showers, which extinguished their fire, and so saturated the cover of their tent, that the water dropped on their faces as they lay folded in the straw and blankets with which they had covered the floor. Their provisions, too, except the salted fish, which they had secured in barrels, began to fail them ; and they became exceedingly anxious for a change of wind. But the storm seemed to mock at their anxiety. Night after night were they awakened by the rain pattering against the sail, and when they raised its edge every succeeding

morning, they saw the sea whitened by the gale, and clouds laden with water rolling heavily from the south-west.

Not more than a mile from the tent there was an inhabited cottage. The solitary tenant, an elderly woman, still known to tradition as *Stine Bheag o' Tarbat*, was famous at this time as one in league with Satan, and much consulted by seafaring men when windbound in any of the neighbouring ports. Her history, as related by her neighbours, formed, like the histories of all the other witches of Scotland, a strange medley of the very terrible and the very ludicrous. A shipmaster, who had unwittingly offended her, had moored his vessel one evening within the rocky bay of Portmahomack, a haven of Tarbat; but on going on deck next morning, he found that the vessel had been conveyed during the night over the rocks and the beach, a broad strip of meadow, two cornfields, and a large moor, into a deep muddy ditch; and there would she have lain till now, had he not found means to conciliate the witch, who, on the following night, transported her to her former moorings. With all this power, however, only a few weeks after, a farmer of the parish, whom she had long annoyed in the shape of a black beetle, succeeded in laying hold of her as she hummed round his bonnet, and confined her for four days in his snuff-box.

Shortly before the arrival of the Cromarty men, a small sloop had been weather-bound for a few days in a neighbouring port; and the master applied to *Stine* for a wind. Part of his cargo consisted of foreign spirits; and on taking leave of the witch he

brought with him two empty bottles, which he promised to fill, and send to her by the ship-boy. It was evening, however, before he reached the vessel ; and the boy would not venture on carrying the bottles by night to her cottage ; in the following morning they were forgotten in the hurry of sailing. The wind blew directly off the land, and from what the master deemed the very best point of the compass ; the vessel scudded down the frith before it, under a tight sail ; it freshened as the land receded, and the mainsail was lowered reef after reef ; before evening it had increased into a hurricane. The master stood by the helm, and in casting an anxious glance at the binnacle, to ascertain his course, his eye caught the two bottles of *Stine Bheag*. “ Ah, witch !” he muttered, “ I must get rid of thee ;” and taking up one of the bottles he raised his arm to throw it over the side, when he was interrupted by a hoarse croaking above head, and on looking up he saw two ravens hovering round the vane. The bottle was replaced. An immense wave came rolling behind in the wake of the vessel ; it neared ; it struck the stern, and rushing over the deck, washed every thing before it, spars, coops, cordage ; but only the bottles were carried overboard. In the moment they rose to the surface the ravens darted upon them, like sea-gulls on a shoal of coal fish ; and the master, as the vessel swept along, could see them bearing them away. The hurricane gradually subsided into a moderate breeze, and the rest of the voyage was neither rough nor unprosperous ; but the shipmaster, it was said, religiously determined never again to purchase a wind. And the Cromarty men, who had

heard the story, were so much of the master's opinion, that it was not until the second week after the wind had set in to the southwest, and when all their provisions were expended, that they resolved on risking a visit to Stine Bheag.

One of them, a tall robust young fellow, named Macglashan, accompanied by two others, after collecting all the placks and boddles of the party, (little pieces of copper coin, with the head of Charles II. on one side, and the Scotch thistle on the other,) set out for the hovel of the witch. It was situated on the shore of a little sandy bay, which opens into the Dornoch Frith, and was one of a range, four in number, three of which were now deserted. The roof of one had fallen in; the two others, with their doors ajar, the casements of the windows bleached white by the sea winds, and with wreaths of chickweed mantling over the sloping sides, and depending from the eaves, seemed very dwellings of desolation. From the door and window of the inhabited hovel, which joined to the one that had fallen, and which in appearance was as ruinous and weather-beaten as either of the other two, there issued dense volumes of smoke, accompanied by a heavy oppressive scent, occasioned apparently by the combustion of some marine vegetable. This range had been inhabited about ten years before by a crew of fishermen, and their families; one of them was the husband, another the son of *Stine Bheag*. The son, it is said, had chanced to come upon her when she was engaged in some of her orgies, and had told his father of what he had seen. They deliberated on delating her as a witch before the presby-

tery of Tain, but ere they had come to a full determination, they unluckily went to sea. *Stine* was not idle ;—there arose a terrible hurricane, and the boat was driven on a quicksand, where she was swallowed up, with all her crew. The widows, disturbed by supernatural sights and noises, deserted their cottages soon after, and *Stine Bheag* became the sole tenant of the range.

Macglashan walked up to the door, which hung half open, and tapped against it, but the sound was lost in a loud crackling noise, resembling a ceaseless discharge of pocket pistols, which proceeded from the interior. He tapped a second time, but the crackling continued, and despairing of making himself heard, he stooped and entered. The apartment was so filled with smoke, that for the first few seconds he could only distinguish a red glare of light upon the hearth, and a small patch of sky, which appeared of a rusty brown colour through the dense volume which issued out at the window. The hag sat on a low stool beside the wall, and fronting the fire, into which at intervals she flung handfuls of dried sea-weed, of that kind which consists of chains of little brown bladders filled with air, and which is used in the making of kelp. As the bladders, one after one, expanded and burst with the heat, she continued to mutter a Gaelic rhyme. The thick smoke circled round her as she bent over the fire, and when the flame shot up through the eddies, Macglashan could see her long sharp features, but when it sunk her eyes were alone visible. Her grizzled hair escaped from a red coif, and fell over her shoulders, round which there was wrapped a square

of red tartan, held on by a large silver brooch. The imagination of a poet could scarcely have invested one of the ancient sibyls with more circumstances of the wild and terrible, or have placed her in a scene of a character so suited to her own. "Sad weather this," said Macglashan ;—the hag started at the unexpected address, and rising up gazed at the intruder with a mixed expression of anger and surprise. "I come," he continued, "from *the point*, where I and my companions have been wind-bound for the last fortnight, and half-starved with cold and hunger to boot. Could you not favour us with a breeze that would serve for Cromarty?" Without waiting a reply, he thrust into her hand the joint contribution of the crew. She spread out her palm to the light, looked at the coins, then at Macglashan, and shook her head. He shook his in turn. "Bad times, mother, bad times, not a rap more among us ; but we will not forget you should we once reach home. "Then send one of your companions," said the witch, "for your lugged water-stoup."—"Ay, an' so you know of them, and of it," muttered Macglashan ;—"Jock, Sandy, this way, lads." The two men entered the apartment. "Run, Sandy," continued the young fellow, "for the muckle stoup," and drawing in a huge settle of plank which stood in the middle of the floor, he seated himself, all unbidden, before the fire of Stine Bheag.

The place was darkened, as I have said, with smoke, but at intervals the flames glanced on the naked walls of turf and stone, and on a few rude implements of housewifery, which were ranged along the sides, together with other utensils of a more question-

able form and appearance. A huge wooden trough, filled with water, and from whence there proceeded a splashing bubbling noise, as if it were filled with live fish, occupied one of the corners. It was sentinelled by a black cat, which sat purring on a stool beside it, and on every louder splash rose from her seat, and stretched her neck over the water. A bundle of dried herbs ; a table, bearing the skeleton of some animal, round part of which a kind of red clay had been moulded, as if by a statuary ; a staff, with the tail of a fish fastened to one end, and the wings of a raven to the other ; and a large earthen vessel, like that in which Hercules sailed to release Prometheus ; with a white napkin tied in the manner of a sail to a stick, which served for a mast, were ranged along the wall. As Macglashan surveyed the apartment *Stine* seemed lost in a reverie, with her head bent, and her eyes fixed upon the fire ; but as if struck by a sudden thought, she started into a more erect posture, and regarding him with a malignant scowl, clutched her hands into a hill of dried weed, and flung a fresh heap on the fire, which for a few seconds seemed extinguished. “ Od, mother,” said the young fellow, nothing appalled by the darkness, “ ye lead a terrible lonely life of it here ; were I in your place I would die of sheer longing in less than a fortnight.”—“ Lonely,” muttered the hag, who seemed in no communicative mood ; “ how ken ye that ?” As she spoke the croak of a raven was heard from the chimney, accompanied by the flutter of wings. “ Ug, ug,” ejaculated Macglashan’s companion, “ let’s out, Mac, and see what’s keeping Sandy.”—“ Nay, here

he comes," said the other, and as he spoke, Sandy entered with the stoup. "And now," said *Stine*, rising and laying hold of it, "ye maun out, an' bide at the rock yonder till I call."

Macglashan and his companions waited for nearly half an hour; night was fast falling, and the ruinous cottages, as the twilight darkened round them, assumed a more dismal appearance. From the window of the inhabited one there glimmered a dull red light, which was repeatedly eclipsed, as if by the shadows of persons passing between the window and the fire. At length the door opened, and the sharp harsh voice of *Stine Bheag* was heard calling from the entrance. Macglashan stepped up to her, and received the stoup, stoppered with a bunch of straw. "Set off," said she, as she delivered it, "on the first blink of to-morrow; but as ye love life, touch not the wisp till ye reach Cromarty." Macglashan promised a strict observance of what she enjoined, took his leave, and set out with his companions for the tent.

The wind lowered during the night, and when early next morning Macglashan raised the edge of the sail, the wide extent of the Moray Frith presented a surface as glassy as that of a mirror; though it still heaved in long ridges, on which the reflection of the red light that preceded sunrise, danced and flickered like sheets of flame. He roused his companions; the tent was struck, the boat launched, the thiafts manned; and, before the sun had risen, the whole party were toiling at the oar. A light breeze from the north-west began to ruffle the surface of the water; it increased into a brisk gale, and the boat with both her

sails set, was soon scudding before it. The ancient towers of Balone, the still more ancient towers of Cadboll,—Hilton, with its ruinous chapel, and Shandwick, with its sculptured obelisk, neared and then receded, as she swept along the shore ; and the sun was yet low in the sky, when, after passing the steep overhanging precipices of the hill of Nigg, she opened the bay of Cromarty. “ What in the name of wonder,” asked one of the crew, “ can *Stine Bheag* hae put in the stoup ? ” “ Rax it this way,” said another, “ we would better be ony gate than in Cromarty, should the minister come to hear of it :—I’m thinking Mac had as weel fling out the wisp here as on the shore.”—“ Think you so,” said Macglashan, “ then send the stoup this way.” He drew out the stopple, and flung it over his head into the sea, but in the next moment, when half-a-dozen necks were stretched out to pry into the vessel, which proved empty, the man stationed at the bows roared out, “ For Heaven’s sake, lads, mind your hanlyards ! lower, lower, a squall from the land ! we shall back fill and go down like a mussel shell.” The crew clustered round the sails, and had succeeded in lowering them, when the squall struck the boat ahead with the fury of a tornado, and almost forced her out of the water. The thwarts were manned, but ere the rowers had bent to the first stroke, the oars were wrested out of their hands by the force of the hurricane. The bay around them was agitated as if beaten by rods ; the wind howled in one continuous gust, without pause or intermission ; and a clond of spray which arose from the waves, like a sheet of drift from a field of snow, swept over them

in so dense a volume, that it hid the land and darkened the heavens. As the boat drifted before the tempest the bay receded, the cliffs, the villages, the castles, were passed in hasty succession, and before noon the crew had landed at Tarbat Ness, where they found *Stine Bheag* sitting on the shore, as if waiting their arrival.

“Donnart deevils, what takes ye here?” was the first salutation of the witch. “Ah, mother, that cursed wisp,” groaned out Macglashan. “Wisp;—Look ye, my frack young man, your weird may hae hemp in it, an sae ye may tempt water when ye like; but a’ the ither drookit bodies there, hae nae such protection. An’ now ye may tak the road, for here maun your boat gizzen till the drift o’ Januar be heapit o’er her gunwale.” “Ah, mother,” said Macglashan, “what could we do on the road? and home were but a cold home without either our fish or our win-bread. Od, it were better for us to plenish the old bothies at the bay, and go and live with yoursell;—but ye must just try and put another wisp in the stoup.” To this she at length consented; and on the following morning the party arrived at Cromarty without any new adventure. The one detailed did not become history until many years after, when it was related by Macglashan. He was probably acquainted with the tenth book of Homer’s *Odyssey*.

CHAPTER XIX.

They said they were an hungry ; sighed forth proverbs—
 That hunger broke stone walls ; that dogs must eat,
 That meat was made for mouths ; that the gods sent not
 Corn for the rich man only :—With these shreds
 They vented their complainings.

CORIOLANUS.

THE autumn and winter of the year 1740, were, like the black years which succeeded the Revolution, long remembered in the parish of Cromarty, and the whole north of Scotland. One evening late in the summer of this year, crops of rich promise were waving on every field, and the farmer anticipated an early harvest ; next morning a chill, dense fog had settled on the whole country, and when it cleared up, the half filled ears drooped on their stalks, and the long pointed leaves slanted towards the soil, as if scathed by fire. The sun looked out with accustomed heat and brilliancy, and a light breeze from the south rolled away every lingering wreath of vapour ;—there succeeded pleasant days and mild evenings ; but the hope of the season was blasted ;—the sun only bleached and shrivelled the produce of the fields, and the breeze rustled through unproductive straw. Harvest came on, but it brought along with it little of the labour and none of the joy of other harvests. The husbandman, instead of carousing with his reapers, brooded, in the

recesses of his cottage, over the ruin which awaited him ; and the poor craftsman, though he had already secured his ordinary store of fish, launched his boat a second time, to provide against the impending famine.

Towards the close of autumn not an ounce of meal was to be had in the market ; and the housewives of Cromarty began to discover that the appetites of their children had become appallingly voracious. The poor things could not be made to understand why they were getting so much less to eat than usual, and the monotonous cry of “ bread, mammy, bread,” was to be heard in every house. Groups of the inhabitants were to be seen on the beach below the town watching the receding tide, in the expectation of picking up a few shell fish ; and the shelves and ledges of the hill were wellnigh stripped by them of their dulce and tangle :—but with all their industry they throve but ill. Their eyes receded, and their cheek bones stuck out ; they became sallow, and lank of jaw, and melancholy ; and their talk was all about the price of corn, bad times, and a failing trade. Poor people ! it was well, for both themselves and the government, that politics had not yet come into fashion ; for had they lived and been subjected to such misery, eighty years later, they would have become radicals to a man :—They would have set themselves to reform the State ; and as they were *very hungry*, no moderate reform would have served.

The winter was neither severe nor protracted, but to the people of Cromarty it was a season of much suffering ; and with the first month of spring there

came down upon them whole shoals of beggars from the upper part of the country, to implore the assistance which they were, alas! unable to render them, and to share with them in the spoils of the sea. The unfortunate paupers, mostly elderly men and women, were so modest and unobtrusive, so unlike common beggars in their costume, which, in most instances, was entire and neat, and so much more miserable in aspect, for they were wasted by famine, that the hearts of the people of the town bled for them. It is recorded of a farmer of the parish, whose crops did not suffer quite so much as those of his neighbours, that he prepared every morning a pot of gruel, and dealt it out by measure to the famishing strangers,—giving to each the full of a small ladle. There was a widow gentlewoman, too, of the town, who imparted to them much of her little, and yet, like the widow of Zarephath, found enough in what remained. On a morning of this spring she saw a thin volume of smoke rising from beside the wall of a corn-yard, which long before had been emptied of its last stack; and approaching it she found it to proceed from a little fire, surrounded by four old women, who were anxiously watching a small pot suspended over the fire by a pin fixed in the wall. Curiosity induced her to raise the lid; as she stretched her hand to it the women looked up imploringly in her face. She found the little pot to be about half filled with entrails of fish, which had been picked up on dunghills and the shore; her heart smote her, and hastening home for a cake of bread, she divided it among the women. Never till her dying day did

she forget the look they gave her when, breaking the cake, she doled out a portion to each.

Towards the end of the month of February, when the sufferings of the people seemed almost to have reached their acme, a Mr. Gordon, one of the most considerable merchants of the town, and a justice of the peace, set out to the country, with a small party, in quest of meal. The old laws of the sheriffdom were wellnigh exploded, but the farmers, desperately attached to every thing that had been known to their fathers, whether for good or ill, were better acquainted with these, than with the liberties and privileges derived to them from the law of the land ; and so when Mr. Gordon entered their houses to ransack the girnals and meal chests, there were many attempts made at concealment, but none at open resistance. The magistrate found one ingenious gudewife buried in a mountainous heap of bedclothes ; the gudeman, it was said, had gone for the *howdie* ; but one of the party mistrusting the story, raised the edge of a blanket, and lo ! two sacks were discovered lying quietly by her side. She was known ever after by the name of “ the pocks’ mither.” The meal procured by the party was carefully portioned out, a quantity deemed sufficient for the farmer and his household being left with him, and the remainder, which was paid for by Mr. Gordon, was carried to town, and sold out to the people in pounds and half pounds.

In the midst of the general distress a small sloop from the village of Gourac entered the frith, to take in a lading of meal, which, by dint of grievous pinch-

ing and hoarding, had been scraped together by some of the farmers of Easter Ross. The vessel was the property of a Mr. Matthew Simpson, who acted as skipper and supercargo ; and she lay on the sands of Nigg, a creek or inlet which deeply indents the frith of Cromarty on the northern side, about two miles from where it opens into the main sea. Twice every twenty-four hours was she stranded on the bottom of the inlet, and the wicker carts, laden with sacks, could be seen from the shore of Cromarty driving up to her side ;—it was evident, too, that she floated heavier every tide ; and many were the execrations vented by the half starved townspeople against Simpson and the farmers. Plans, innumerable, were formed among them to seize on the vessel and dispose of her cargo ; but their schemes fell to the ground, for there was none of them bold or skilful enough to take the lead in such an enterprize ; and, in emergencies of this kind, a party without a leader is a body without a soul. Meanwhile the sloop left the creek deeply laden, and threw out her anchors opposite the town, where she lay waiting a fair wind.

Towards the evening of the 9th of April, 1741, a shopkeeper of Cromarty was half sitting, half reclining on his counter, humming a tune, and beating time with his elwand on the point of his shoe. He was a spruce, dapper, little personage, of great flexibility of countenance, full of trick and intrigue, and much noted among his simpler townsfolks for a lawyer-like ingenuity. He was, withal, a man of very considerable courage when contemplating a distant danger, but somewhat of a coward when it came near. His various correspondents addressed him by the name of

Mr. Alexander Ross,—the townspeople called him silken Sawney. On an opposite angle of the counter sat Donald Sandison, a tall, robust, red-haired man who wrought in wood, but whose shop, from the miserable depression of trade, had been shut up for the last two months. He had resided at Edinburgh about five years before; and had, when there, with another man of Cromarty, named Bain, the satisfaction of escorting the notorious Porteous from the Tolbooth to the Grass Market; and had been much edified, for he was in at the death, by the earnest remonstrances and dying ejaculations of that worthy. A few days afterwards, however, he found his services to the commonwealth, on this occasion, so ill appreciated, that he deemed it prudent to quit the metropolis for the place of his nativity. No one had ever heard him boast of the exploit; but Bain, who was a tailor, was not so prudent, and so the story came out.

“Weel Sandison, what are we gaun to do wi’ the meal ship?” said the shopkeeper, laying down his elwand, and sitting up erect.

“Do wi’ the ship,” replied the mechanic, scratching his head with a half perplexed, half humorous, expression, “man, I dinna weel ken. Its bad enough to see a’ yon meal going down the frith, an’ folks at hame dying o’ hunger!”

“But Sandison,” rejoined the wily shopkeeper, “if it does a’ go doon the frith, I’m just thinking that it will be no bodie’s wyte but your ain.”

“How that, man?” rejoined Sandison.

“I’ll just tell you how that, an’ in your ain words

too. Whig as ye are, ye say that all men are no' born alike. Some come intil the world to do just what they're bid, an' go just where they're bid, and say just what they hear their neebours saying ;—while ithers, again, come into it to think baith for themsels an' the folk round them.—Is that no' your very sentiment ?”

“ Weel, an' is it no true ?”

“ Ay, an' I'll gie you a proof o't. What takes the townsfolks to your shop when any thrawart matter comes in their way that they canna redd up o' themselves ?—And why do they ask your advice before entering into a law plea ?—or whether they should try the fishing ?—or whether the strange minister gied a gude discourse ?—you're no a lawyer, or a boatman, or a divine. Why do they call for you to lay a tulzie, when you're no a magistrate ?—and why do folk that quarrel wi' every bodie else, take care an' no quarrel wi' you ? Just, my man, because they ken that you were born wi' a bigger mind an' a bolder heart than themsels,—born a gentleman, as it were, in spite o' your birth an' your ragged coat ;—an' now that the puir folk are starving, an' a shipfull o' meal going down the frith, you slink awa from your proper natural office o' leader, an' just let them starve on.”

“ Sawney, man,” said the mechanic, “ ye have such a natural turn for flattery that you do it for just nothing. But even allowing that I am a clever enough chield to make an onslaught on the shipman's meal, (a man wi' mair wit, I'm fear'd, would be hungrier than any o' us ere he would think o't,) I may hesitate a wee in going first in the ploy. I have a wife, my man, an' twa bairnies. Were there naething to fear but

the stroke o' a cutlass, or the flash o' a musket, I widna muckle hesitate, maybe, but the law's a rather bad thing in these quiet times ;—an' I daresay 'twould be better to want cravat an' nightcap a' thegither than hae the ane o' brown hemp an' the ither o' white cotton."

"Hoot, man, ye're thinking o' Jock Porteous—we can surely get the meal without hanging ony bodie. —Hunger breaks, ye ken, through stone walls ; an' our apology will be written on the verra face o' the affair.—Besides, we're no going to steal the meal ; —we're only going to sell it out on behalf o' the inhabitants, as Mr. Gordon did the meal o' the parish. —An' as for risk,—gang ye first, an' here's my hand, I'll go second mysel,—if I had only your brow, my man, I would go first."

But why record the whole dialogue :—Sandison, though characteristically wary, was, in reality, little averse from the scheme ; he entered into it ; and, after fully digesting it with the wily shopkeeper, set out to impart it to some of the bolder townsmen. "Now haud ye in readiness," said he to the man of silk, as he quitted his shop, "I shall call ye up at midnight."

The hour of midnight arrived, and a party of about thirty men, their faces blackened, and their persons enveloped, some in women's cloaks, some in their own proper vestments turned inside out, marched down the lane which, passing the shopkeeper's door, led to the beach. They were headed by a tall active looking man, wrapped up in a seaman's greatcoat. No one, in the uncertain gloom of midnight, could have identified his sooty features with those of the peaceable mechanic Sandison, but there was light enough

to show the butt ends of two pistols stuck in the leathern belt which clasped his middle, and that there hung by his side an enormous basket-hilted broadsword. Stopping short at the domicile of the shopkeeper, he tapped gently against a window ;—no one made answer. He tapped again. “ Wha’s there ? ” exclaimed a shrill female voice from within. “ Sawney, man, Sawney, wauken up ! ”—“ O Sawney’s frae hame,” rejoined the voice ; “ there came an express for him ance errand, just i’ the gloamin, an’ he’s awa to the sheriffdom to see his sick mither.”—“ Daidlan deccitfu’ bodie ! ” exclaimed Sandison, “ wha could hae reckoned on this ! But it were shame, lads, to turn back now that we hae gane sac far ; an’ besides, if ill comes o’ the venture, he sanna escape. An’ now, shaw yoursels to be men, an’ keep as free frae fear or anger as if ye were in the parish kirk. Launch down the yawls ane by ane, an’ dinna let their keels skriegh alang the stanes ; an’ be sure an’ put in the spile plugs that we mayna swamp by the way. Let ilk rower muffle his oar wi’ his neckcloth, just i’ the clamp ; an’, for gudesake, skaith nane o’ the crew. Willie, dinna forget the nails an’ the hammer ; Bernard, man, bring up the rear.” The cool resolution of the leader seemed imparted to his followers ; and, in a few minutes, they were portioned into three boats, which, with celerity, and in silence, glided towards the meal sloop.

The first was piloted by Sandison. It contained nearly two thirds of the whole party ; and when the other two boats moored close to the vessel, one on each side, and their crews, as they had been instructed, remained at their respective posts, Sandison steered

under the stern, and, laying hold of the taffrail, leaped aboard. He was followed by about twelve of his companions, and the boat then dropped alongside. Every manœuvre had been planned with the utmost deliberation and care. One of Sandison's apprentices nailed down the forecastle hatchway, and thus imprisoned the crew; the others opened the hold, unslung the tacklings on each side, and immediately commenced lowering the meal sacks into their boats; while Sandison himself, accompanied by a neighbour, groped his way down the cabin stairs to secure the master. Simpson, a large powerful man, had got out of bed, alarmed by the trampling on deck, and, with no other covering than his shirt, was cautiously climbing the stairs, when, coming in sudden contact with the descending mechanic, he lost footing, and rolled down the steps he had ascended, drawing the other along with him. "Murder, murder, thieves," he roared out; and a desperate struggle ensued on the floor of the cabin. The place was pitch dark, and when the other Cromarty man rushed into the fray, he received, all unwittingly, from his Herculean leader, who had half wrested himself out of the grasp of Simpson, a blow that sent him reeling against the vessel's side. Again the combatants closed in an iron grapple, and rolled over the floor. But the mechanic proved the more powerful; he rose over his antagonist, and then flinging himself upon him, the basket hilt of the broadsword dashed full against his naked breast. "Oh, oh, oh," he exclaimed. "hae mercy, hae mercy," and coiling himself up like a huge snake, he lay passive under the grasp of the mechanic, who, kneeling by his side, drew

a pistol, which he had taken the precaution to load with powder only, and discharged it right above his face ; disclosing to him, for a moment, the blackened features that frowned over him, and a whole group of dingy faces that now thronged the cabin stairs. Meanwhile the work proceeded ; the sloop gradually lightened as the boats became heavier, and, at length, a signal from the deck informed Sandison that the object of the expedition was accomplished. Before liberating Simpson, however, he forced him upon his knees, and extorted an oath from him that he should not again return to the north of Scotland for meal.

Before morning, about sixty large sacks, the lading of the three boats, were lodged in a cellar possessed, says my authority, by Mr. James Rabson, a meal and corn merchant of Cromarty ; but James, though fully authorised by all his neighbours to dole out the contents to the inhabitants, and account to Simpson for the money, very prudently lodged his key under the door, and set out for the country on some pretext of business. In the meanwhile Simpson applied to the sheriff of the county, a warrant was granted him, the meal was seized in behalf of the proper owner ; and the pacific Mr. Donald Sandison was appointed, on the recommendation of the sheriff, to stand sentry over it. On the following day, a posse of law officers from the ancient burgh of Tain, the farmers and farm servants of Easter-Ross, and Simpson and the sailors were to come, it was said, to transport his charge from the cellar to the vessel. Sandison, with a half ludicrous, half melancholy expression of face, took up his station before the door ; and enveloped in his greatcoat, but

encumbered with neither pistols nor broadsword, he stalked up and down before it until morning.

About two hours after sunrise, four large boats, crowded with people, were seen approaching the town, and, in a few minutes after, seven-eighths of the whole inhabitants, men, women, and children, armed with stones and bludgeons, were drawn out on the beach to oppose their landing. Such an assemblage! There were the parish schoolboys, active little fellows, that could hit to a hair's breadth; and there the town apprentices of all denominations, stripped of their jackets, and with their aprons puffed out before them, with well selected pebbles. There, too, were the women of the place, ranged tier beyond tier, from the water's edge to the houses behind, and of all ages and aspects, from the girl that had not yet left school, to the crone that had hobbled from her cottage assisted by her crutch. The lanes were occupied by full grown men, who, armed with bludgeons, reserved themselves for the final charge, and now crouched behind their wives and sisters to avoid being seen from the boats. A few young lads, choice spirits of the place, had climbed up to the ridges of the low cottages which at that time presented, in this part of the town, a line parallel to the beach. Some of them were armed with pistols, some with satchels full of stones; and farther up the lanes there was a second party of women, who meditated an attack on Rabson's cellar. Dire was the combination of sound. The boys shouted, the girls shrieked, the apprentices, tapping their fingers against their throats, bleated like sheep in mockery of the farmers, the women yelled out their defiance in one continuous

howl, interrupted, occasionally, by the hoarse exclamations and loud huzzas of the men. The boats advanced by inches. After every few strokes, the rowers would pause over their oars, and wrench themselves half round to reconnoitre the myriads of waving arms and threatening faces which thronged the beach. As they crept onwards, a few stones flung from slings by some of the boys went whizzing over their heads. "Now pull hard, and at once," shouted out Simpson, "we have to deal with but women and children, and shall disperse them before they have fired half a broadside." The rowers bent them to their oars, the boats started shorewards like arrows from the string, there arose a shout from the assembled multitude, which the distant hills echoed back to them in low thunder, and a shower of stones from the boys, the apprentices, the women, the men,—from the shore, the lanes, the cottage roofs, the chimney tops, came hailing down upon them thick and ceaseless, rattling, pattering, crashing, like the *debris* of a mountain rolled over its precipices by an earthquake. The water was beaten into foam as if lashed by a hurricane. Every individual of the four crews disappeared in an instant; the oars swung loose on the gunwales, or slipped overboard. At length, however, the boats, propelled partly by the wind, partly by the force of the missiles, drifted from the shore; and melancholy was the appearance of the people within, when, after the stones began to fall short, they gathered themselves up, and looked cautiously over the sides. There were broken and contused heads among them beyond all reach of reckoning; and one poor man of Easter-Ross, who had been

marked out by a young fellow named Junor, the best slinger in town, had carried two good eyes with him into the conflict, and only one out of it. They rowed slowly to the other side, and the victors could see them, until they landed, unfolding neckcloths and handkerchiefs, and binding up heads and limbs.

The attack on the boats had no sooner commenced, than the female party, who had been stationed in the lanes, proceeded to Rabson's cellar. "We maun hae meal," said the women to Sandison, who was lounging before the door with his arms folded in his greatcoat, and a little black tobacco pipe in his mouth. "Puff," replied the mechanic, shooting a huge burst of smoke into the face of the fairest of the speakers. "We maun hae meal," reiterated the women. "Puff, weel neebours, puff, I mauna betray trust, ye ken, puff, an' what else am I stationed here for, than just to keep the meal frae you? puff, puff." "But we maun hae't, an' we will hae't, an' we sall hae't, whether you will or no," shrieked out a virago armed with a huge axe, which the mechanic at once recognised as his own, and who dealt, as she spoke, a tremendous blow on the door. "Gudesake, Jess," said the mechanic, losing in his fear for his favourite tool somewhat of his self possession, "keep the edge frae the nails." Stepping back a few paces, he leisurely knocked out the ashes of his pipe against his thumb nail; and, with the remark that "strong han' (force) was a masterfu argument, and that one puir working man, who hadna got his night's rest, was no match for a score o' idle queans," he relinquished his post, and took sanctuary in his own dwelling. In less than half

an hour after, the whole contents of the cellar had disappeared. There was a hale old woman, a pauper of the place, who did not claim her customary goupens for two whole years thereafter; and a shoemaker named Millar was not seen purchasing an ounce of meal for a much longer time.

Ninety years after the year of the meal mob, and when every one who had either shared in it, or remembered it, were sleeping in their graves, I was amusing myself one wet day in turning over some old papers stored up in the drawers of a moth eaten scrutoire, which had once belonged to Donald Sandison; when a small parcel of manuscripts, wrapped up with a piece of tape which had once been red, attracted my notice. The first manuscript I drew out bears date 1742, and is entitled "Representation, Condescendence, and Interlocutors, in the process of Matthew Simpson against the Cromarty men." It contains a grievous complaint made by the townsfolks to the Right Hon. Lord Balmerino. "Simpson is a person of a rancorous, and very litigious spirit," says the paper; "and it is surely not a little unreasonable in him to expect, that the people of a whole country side, indubitably innocent of every act of violence alleged against them, should be compelled to undertake a weary pilgrimage to Edinburgh, when, from the circumstances of the case, any thing they could have to depone anent the spulzie, would yield exactly the same result, whether deponed at Edinburgh, Cromarty, or Japan." It goes on to show that the people were miserably depressed by poverty; and, that if compelled to set out on such a journey, they would have

to beg by the way ; while their wives and children would be reduced to starvation at home, without even the resource of begging itself, seeing that all their neighbours were as wretchedly poor as themselves. Next, in order in the parcel, followed the statements of Mr. Matthew Simpson, addressed also to his Lordship. He had been robbed, he affirmed, by the men of the north, three several times ; twice by the people, and once by the lawyers ; and having lost, in this way, a great deal of money, he could not well afford to lose more. It is stated, further, by the master, that Edinburgh could not be farther from Cromarty, than Cromarty from Edinburgh ; and that it was quite as reasonable, and fully as safe for the weaker party, that the conspirators should have to defend themselves in the metropolis, as that he the prosecutor should have to assail them in the village. Both manuscripts are redolent of that old school of Scotch law, in which joke was so frequently called in to the assistance of argument, and dry technicalities relieved by dry humour. A third paper of the parcel bears date 1750, and is entitled, “ Discharge from Matthew Simpson to Donald Sandison and others.” The fourth and last is a piece of barbarous rhyme, dignified, however, with the name of poetry, and which, after describing meal-mongers as “ damned rascals,” and “ the worst of all men,” assures them with a proper contempt for both the law of the land, and the doctrine of purgatory, that there is an executive power vested in the people, which enables them to take summary justice on their oppressors, and that the Devil gets villains as soon as they are dead.

Silken Sawney, the first projector of the spulzie, did not escape in the process, though he contrived a few years after to save his coin by running the country. He was the only person in Cromarty who, in the year 1745, assumed the white cockade; and no sooner had he appeared with it on the street, than he was apprehended by a party of his neighbours who were kingsmen, and incarcerated in an alehouse. A guard was mounted before the door, and, on the morrow, the poor man of silk was to be sent aboard a sloop of war then lying in the bay; but, as his neighbours, when they took the precaution of mounting guard, did not think proper to call to memory that his apartment had a door of its own, which opened into a garden behind, he deemed it prudent, instead of waiting the result, to pass through it on a journey to the Highlands; and he never again returned to Cromarty. The other conspirators suffered in proportion, not to what they had perpetrated, but to what they possessed. A proprietor named Macculloch was stripped of his little patrimony, while some of his poorer companions escaped Scot free. Sandison contrived to pay his portion of the fine, and made chairs and tables for forty years after. He was deemed one of the most ingenious mechanics in the north of Scotland. I have spent whole days in the house of his grandson, half buried in dusty volumes and moth eaten drawings which had once been his; and I derived my first knowledge of architecture from a treatise by Palladio, which, as the margins testified, he had studied with much care. At a sale of household furniture,

which took place in Cromarty about thirty years ago, the auctioneer, after examining a large handsome table with minute attention, recommended it to the purchasers by assuring them it was certainly the workmanship of either the Devil or Donald Sandison.

CHAPTER XX.

Old sithes they had with the rumples set even,
 And then into a tree fast driven ;
 And some had hatchets set on a pole,
 Mischievous weapons, antie and droll.

Each where they lifted tax and cess,
 And did the lieges sore oppress,
 And cocks and hens, and churns and cheese,
 Did *kill* and eat when they could seize.

DUGALD GRAHAM'S *History of the Rebellion*.

WITH the solitary exception mentioned in the previous chapter, the whole people of Cromarty were loyal to the house of Hanover. They were all sound Protestants to the utmost of their ability ; and never failed doing justice in a bumper to the “best in Christendom,” but when the liquor was bad. It was, therefore, with no feelings of complacency that, in the autumn of 1745, they learned that the Pretender, after landing in the western Highlands, had set off with a gathering of Gaelic Roman Catholics to take London from the King. They affirmed, however, that the redecoats were too numerous, and London too strong, to leave the enterprize a chance of success ; and it was not until Cope had been set a scampering, and the bayonets of England had proved insufficient to defend it on the Scottish side, that they began to pity George Rex, (poor man) and to talk about the downfall of the kirk. Their attention, however, was called off from all such minor matters to a circumstance connected with the

outbreaking, which directly affected themselves. Parties of wild Highlanders, taking advantage of the defenceless state of the Lowlands, and the cause of the Pretender, went prowling about the country, robbing, as the smith fought, "every man to his own hand;" and stories of their depredations began to pour into the town. They were doing great skaith, it was said, to victual and drink, spulzieing women of their yarn, and men of their shoes and bonnets;—as for money there was, luckily, very little in the country. Nor was it possible to conciliate them by any adaptation whatever of one's politics. A man of Ferindonald, a genuine friend to the Stuart, had gone out to meet with them, and in the fulness of his heart, after perching himself on a hillock by the way side, he continued to cry out, "your welcome! your welcome!" from their first appearance until they had come up to him. "Welcomes or na welcomes," said a bare-headed, bare-footed Highlander, as stooping down he seized him by the ancles, "welcomes or na welcomes, *thoir dho do brougan.*" (Give me your shoes.)

Every day brought a new story of the marauders;—a Navity tacksman, who had listened himself half crazy, and could speak or think of nothing else, was enough of himself to destroy the quiet of the whole parish. Some buried casks of meal under their barn floors, other chests of plaiding and yarn. The tacksman interred an immense girnal, containing five bolls of oatmeal, which escaped the rebels, only to be devoured by the rats. So thoroughly had he prepared himself for the worst, that, when week after week went by, and still no Highlanders, he seemed actually disap-

pointed. One morning, however, in the end of January, 1746, he was called out to his cottage door to see something unusual on the hill of Ethie ; a number of fairy-like figures seemed moving along the ridge, and then, as they descended in a dark compact body to the hollow beneath, there were seen to shoot out from them, at uncertain intervals, quick, sudden flashes, like lightnings from a cloud. " Oeh, oeh," exclaimed the tacksman, who well knew what the apparition indicated, " the longest day that ere came, even came at last ;" and away he went, to reside until the return of quieter times, in a solitary cave of the hill.

The marauders entered the town about mid-day. They were armed every one after his own fashion, some with dirks and broadswords, some with pistols and fowling pieces, and not a few with sithes, pikes, and Lochaber axes. Some carried immense bunches of yarn, some webs of plaiding, some bundles of shirts and stockings. Most of the men of the place, who would readily enough have joined issue with them at the cudgel, but who bore no marked affection to broadswords and Lochaber axes, had conveyed themselves out of the way, leaving their wives to settle with them as they best might. They entered the better looking houses by half dozens, turned the furniture topsy turvy, emptied chests and drawers, did wonderful execution on dried salmon and hung beef, and set ale barrels abroad. One poor woman in attempting to rescue a bundle of yarn, had her cheek laid open by a fellow who dashed the muzzle of his pistol into her face ; another was thrown down and robbed of her shoes. There lived at this time one

Nannie Miller, a matron of the place, who sold ale. She was a large-boned, amazon-looking woman, about six feet in height, of immense strength, and no ordinary share of courage. Two of the Highlanders entered her cottage, and with much good nature, (for they had had a long walk, she said,) she set down before them a pint of her best ale, and a basket of scones, with some dried fish. They ate and drank, and then rose to spulzie ; but they were too few, as it proved for the enterprize ; for when one of them was engaged in ransacking a large meal-barrel, and the other in breaking open a chest, Nannie made a sudden onslaught, bundled the one fellow head-foremost into the barrel, and turning on his companion as he rushed in to the rescue, floored him with a single blow. The day was all her own in a twinkling ; the Highlanders fled, one of them half choked by the meal, the other more than half throttled by Nannie ; but glad, notwithstanding, to get off so well.

In the middle of the spulzie, a sloop of war hove in sight, and a boat was seen shooting out to meet her, from under the rocks of the hill. Sail after sail was run out on her yards, as soon as the boat had touched her side, and she came careering up the frith like an angry giant. The Highlanders gathered in the street :

Fu' loud in Ershe they begowt to clatter,
And rowped like revin and ruke.

One of them, who seemed to have drunk freely, was lacking with his broadsword at the rails of a wooden bridge, and swearing furiously at the ship ; and a little girl, who chanced to be passing with a jug of milk, was so terrified that she fell and broke the jug.

“Poor sing, poor sing,” said the Highlander, as he raised her and wiped her face with the corner of his plaid, “hersel widna hurt a pit o’ you.” The party, in their retreat, took the road that passes towards the west, along the edge of the bay, and no sooner had the sloop cleared the intervening headland, than she began to fire on them. One of the bullets struck off a piece from a large stone on the shore, termed the *Pindler*, and in less than half a minute the Highlanders were scattered over the face of the hill. They did not again return to Cromarty. Though they fared better in their predatory excursions than most of their countrymen who accompanied the Prince, and transferred to their homes much of the “plenishing” of the Lowlands, it was observed that in few instances did their gains enrich their descendants. I once wrought in the same shed with an old mason, a native of the parish of Urquhart, who, in giving me a history of his early life, told me that his father had left at his death a considerable sum of money to himself and three brothers, and that not one of them was sober for two days together until they had squandered the whole. “And no wonder,” remarked another mason from the same parish, who was hewing beside him, “your father went out a-harrying in the Forty-Five, and muckle did he bring back with him ; but it was ill gotten and couldna last.”

As spring came on a new set of stories began to pass current among the people of the town. The Pretender had failed, it was said, in his enterprize, and was falling back on the Highlands. But there was something anomalous in the stories ; for it was

affirmed that he was both running away and gaining all the battles. This they could not understand ; and when, early in March, Lord Loudon entered the town at the head of sixteen hundred men, in full retreat before the rebels, they began to ask whether it was customary for one flying army to pursue another. His Lordship dealt by them more hardly than even the marauders ; for, after transporting his men across the ferry, he broke all their boats. “ It’s a sair time for puir folk,” said an old fisherman, when witnessing the destruction of his skiff, “ gain King, gain Pretender, wacs me, I’m the loser gain wha like.”

Amid all the surmises and uncertainties of the townspeople, matters were fast drawing to a crisis with the Highlanders. On the 15th of April a sloop from Lossymouth entered the frith, and brought intelligence that Duke William and his army had crossed the Spey, and were on the march for Inverness, then occupied by the rebels. On the following morning nearly all the males of the place, and not a few of the women, had climbed the neighbouring hill to watch the progress of their march. The weather was dull and unpleasant. There was a cold breeze from the east, accompanied by a thick drizzling rain, and the hills of Moray and Inverness were girdled with wreaths of mist. The lower grounds, which lie along the frith, looked dim and blue through the haze, and the eye vainly commanded the whole tract of country which stretches between Inverness and Nairn. A little after noon, however, the weather began to clear up, and a sailor who had brought with him the ship glass, thought he could discover something unusual on the moor of Culloden.

Every eye was turned in that direction. Suddenly there rose a little dense cloud of smoke, as if a volcano had burst out on the moor ; then succeeded the booming of cannon, and the rattle of musketry. " They are at it, they are at it, God wi' the right ! " shouted out Donald Sandison, " look, Sandy Wright, is the smoke no going the way o' Inverness ?—look, Sandy, look ! " " It's but the easterly har," said Sandy, " O to be near enough to gie one stroke for the King ! " The smoke continued to rise in clouds that went rolling towards the west, and the roar of cannon to rebound among the hills. At length they could hear only the smart pattering of musketry, and the tide of battle seemed evidently sweeping towards Inverness. The cloud passed from the moor ; and when, at intervals, a fresh burst shot up through the haze, it seemed to rise from among the fields in the vicinity of the town. Anon all was silence ; and the people, after lingering till near nightfall, returned to their homes to tell that Duke William had beaten the rebels, and to drink healths to the King. They spoke always of the Duke's army as " our folk," and his victory as " our victory." I have heard an old woman of the place repeat a rude song, expressive of their triumph on this occasion, which she had learned from her nurse when almost an infant. My memory has retained only one of the verses, and a horrible verse it is :

Lovat's head i' the pat,
Horns and a' thegither,
We'll mak brose o' that,
An' gie the swine their supper.

In after years they thought less hardly of the cause of the Stuarts ; and I have heard some of their old men relate stories of the poor people who suffered at this time, with a good deal of feeling. There was a Highlander named Robertson, a man of rare wit and humour, who had been crippled of an arm at Culloden. He used, in after years, to come to the place as a travelling merchant, and always met with much kindness from them. He was so much attached to the Prince that he would willingly have lost the other arm for him too. Another Highlander, who had also been wounded on the moor, was a great favourite with them likewise. On seeing the battle irretrievably lost, and further resistance unavailing, he was stealing warily out of the field, when two English Dragoons came galloping up to him, to cut him down. He turned round, drew a pistol from his belt, shot the foremost through the body, and then hurled his weapon at the head of the other, who immediately drew rein and rode off. The sword of the dying man wounded him, in its descent, in the fleshy part of the hand, between the thumb and the forefinger ; and he retained the scar while he lived. There was another Highlander who resided near Kessock, who, immediately after the battle of Preston, had vowed that he would neither cut nor comb the hair of his head until Charles Stuart was placed on the throne of his ancestors. And he religiously observed his vow. My grandfather saw him twenty years after the battle. He was then a strange grotesque-looking thing, not very unlike a huge cabbage set a-walking ; for his

hair stuck out nearly a foot on each side of his head, and was matted into a kind of felt. But truce with such stories ! Fifty years ago they formed an endless series ; but they have now nearly all passed away ; or only live, if I may so express myself, in those echoes of the departed generations which still faintly reverberate among the quieter recesses of the present. Of all the people who witnessed the smoke of Culloden from the hill of Cromarty I remember only three.

About eighteen years ago, when quite a boy, I was brought by a friend to see a very old man then on his death-bed, who resided in a small cottage among the woods of the hill. My friend had lived with him for the twenty preceding years on terms of the closest intimacy, and had been with him, about ten months before, when he met with an accident from a falling tree, by which he received so serious an injury that it proved the occasion of this, his final illness. A thick darkness, however, had settled over all the events of his latter life, and he remembered neither his acquaintance of twenty years, nor the accident. His daughter mentioned to him the father of my friend, in the hope of awakening some early train of thought that might lead him into the more recent period ; but his knowledge of even him had commenced during the forty previous years, and his name sounded as strangely to him as that of his son. " He is a great grand-child," said the woman, " of your old friend Donald Roy, the Nigg elder." " Of Donald Roy !—a great grand-child of Donald Roy," he exclaimed, holding out his hard withered hand, " Oh how glad I am to see him ! How kind it is of you, sir," he added,

“thus to visit a poor bed-ridden old man. I have now lived in the world more than a hundred years, and during my long sojourn have known few men I could compare with Donald Roy.”

The old man raised himself in his bed, for his strength had not yet quite failed him, and began to relate to my friend, in a full unbroken voice, some of the stories regarding the Nigg elder, which I have imparted to the reader in a former chapter. His mind was full of the early past, and he seemed to see its events all the more clearly from the darkness of the intervening period,—just as the stars may be discerned at noon day at the bottom of a deep mine, when they are invisible from the summit of a lofty mountain. He ran over the incidents of his early life. He told how, in his thirtieth year, when the country resounded with the clash of arms, he had quitted his peaceful avocations as a gardener, and joined the army of the King. He fought at Culloden, and saw the clans broken before the bayonets of Cumberland. His heart bled, he said, for his countrymen. They lay bleeding on the moor, or were scattered over it; and he saw the long swords of the horsemen plied incessantly in the pursuit. Still more melancholy were his feelings, when, from a hill of Inverness-shire, he looked down on a wide extent of country, and saw the smoke of a hundred burning cottages ascending in the calm morning air.—He died a few weeks after our visit, aged a hundred years and ten months. His death took place in winter;—it was an open, boisterous winter, that bore heavy on the weak and aged; and in less than a month after, two very old men, be-

sides, were also gathered to their fathers. And they, too, had had a share in the Forty-Five.

The younger was a ship-boy at the time, and the ship in which he sailed was captured with a lading of government stores, by a party of the rebels. He was named Robertson, and there were several of the Robertsons of Struan among the party. He was soon on very excellent terms with them ; and, on one occasion, when rallying some of the Struans on their undertaking, he spoke of their leader as the Pretender. “ Beware my boy,” said an elderly Highlander, “ and do not again repeat that word ; there are men in the ship who, if they but heard you, would, perhaps, take your life for it ;—for remember we are not all Robertsons.” The other old man who died at this time, had been an officer, it was said, in the Prince’s army ; but he was a person of a distant, reserved cast of character ; and there was little known of his history, except that he had been bred to the profession of medicine, and had been unfortunate through his adherence to the Prince. It was remarked by the townspeople that his spirit and manners were superior to his condition.

Among the old papers in Sandison’s scrutoire I found a curious version of the 137th Psalm, the production of some unfortunate Jacobite of this period. It seems to have been written at Paris shortly after the failure of the enterprize, and when the Prince and his party were in no favour at court ; for the author, a man, apparently, of keen feelings, with all the sorrowful energy of a wounded spirit, applies the curses de-

nounced against Edom and Babylon to England and France.

PSALM CXXXVII.

By the sad Seine we sat and wept,
When Scotland we thought on;
Reft of her brave and true, and all
Her ancient spirit gone.

“Revenge,” the sons of Gallia said,
“Revenge your native land;
Already your insulting foes
Crowd the Batavian strand.”

How shall the sons of freedom e’er
For foreign conquest fight!
How wield anew the luckless sword
That failed in Scotland’s right!

If thee, O Scotland, I forget,
Till fails my latest breath,
May foul dishonour stain my name,
Be mine a coward’s death.

May sad remorse for fancied guilt
My future days employ,
If all thy sacred rights are not
Above my chiefest joy.

Remember England’s children, Lord,
Who on Drumossie day,
Deaf to the voice of kindred love,
“Raze, raze it quite,” did say.

And thou, proud Gallia ! faithless friend,
Whose ruin is not far,
Just Heaven on thy devoted head,
Pour all the woes of war !

When thou thy slaughter'd little ones,
And ravished dames shalt see,
Such help, such pity may'st thou have,
As Scotland had from thee.

CHAPTER XXI.

Fechtam memorate blodæam,
Fechtam terribilem.

DRUMMOND'S *Polemo Middinia*.

Tulzies lang-remember'd an' bluidy,
Terrible tulzies.

Muckle-Vennel Translation.

It is well for human happiness in the ruder ages, that cowardice is rarely or never the characteristic of a people who have either no laws, or laws that cannot protect them; for, in the more unsettled stages of society, personal courage is a necessary policy, and no one is less safe than he who attempts to escape danger by running away. During the early part of the last century, Cromarty was wellnigh as rude a village of the kingdom as any it contained. The statute-book had found its way into it at a much remoter period, but its authority had not yet travelled so far; and so the inhabitants were left to protect themselves by their personal courage and address, just in the way their ancestors had done centuries before. It was partly a consequence of this, and partly from the circumstance that two or three families of the place were deeply imbued for several generations, with a warlike spirit which seemed born with them, that, for years both before and after the Rebellion, the prowess of the people, as exhibited in their quarrels with folk of the neighbouring districts, was celebrated all over the

country. True it was they had quailed before the rebels, but then the best soldiers of the crown had done the same. On one occasion two of them, brothers, of the name of Duff,—gigantic fellows of six feet and a half, had stood back to back for an entire hour in the throng of a Redcastle market, defending themselves against half the cudgels of Strathglass. On another, at the funeral of a townsman, who was interred in the burial ground of Kilmuir, a party of them had fought with the people of the parish, and defeated them in their own territories. On a third, after a battle which lasted for several hours, they had beat off the men of Rosemarkie and Avoch from a peat moss in an unappropriated moor ; and this latter victory they celebrated in a song, in which it was humourously proposed, that, as their antagonists had been overpowered by the men of the parish, they should, in their next encounter, try their chance of war with the women. In short, their frays at weddings, funerals, and markets, were multiplied beyond number, until, at length, the cry of “hiloa ! help for Cromarty,” had become as formidable as the war cry of any of the neighbouring clans.

But there are principles which are good or evil according to the direction in which they operate ; and of this class is that warlike principle whose operations I am here attempting to describe. It was well for the people of Cromarty, that when there was no law powerful enough to protect them, they had courage enough to protect themselves ; and particularly well at a period when the neighbouring Highlanders were still united by the ties of clanship into formidable bodies,

ready to assert to a man the real or pretended rights of any individual of their number. It was not well, however, that these men of Cromarty should have broken the heads of half the men of Kilmuir, for merely insisting on a prescriptive right of carrying a corpse to the church-yard, and such was the sole occasion of the quarrel ; or, that after appropriating to themselves, much at the expense of justice, the moss of the Milbuoy Common, they should have deemed it legitimate sport to insult in bad rhyme the poor people whom they had deprived of their winter's fuel, and who were literally starving for want of it. Occasionally, however, they avenged on themselves the wrongs done to their neighbours ; for, though no tribe of men could be more firmly united at a market or tryst, where an injury done to one of them was an injury done to every one, they were not quite so friendly when in town, where their interests were separate, and not unfrequently at variance. Their necessities abroad had taught them how to fight, and their resentments at home often engaged them in repeating the lesson. Their very enjoyments had caught hold of it, and Martinmas and the New Year were not more the festivals of good ale than of broken heads. This lesson, sufficiently vexatious at any time, except when conned in its proper school, became peculiarly a misfortune to them upon the change which began to take place in the northern counties about the year 1730, when the law of Edinburgh, as it was termed by a Strathearron freebooter, arrived at the ancient burgh of Tain, and took up its seat there, much to the terror and annoyance of the neighbouring districts.

Subsequent to this unfortunate event, a lawyer named Macculloch fixed his place of residence among the people of Cromarty, that he might live by their quarrels ; and, under the eye of this sagacious personage, the stroke of a cudgel became as potent as that of the wand of a magician. Houses and gardens, and corn furrows vanished before it. Law was not yet sold at a determined price. It was administered by men who, having spent the early part of their lives amid feuds and bickerings, were still fully as much characterized by the spirit of the partizan, as by the impartiality of the judge ; and, under these men, the very statute-book itself became a thing of predilections and antipathies ; for while, in some instances, justice, and a great deal more, cost almost nothing, in others it was altogether beyond price. Macculloch, however, who dealt it out by retail, rendered it sufficiently expensive even when at the cheapest. Fines and imprisonments, and accounts which his poor clients could not read, but which they were compelled to pay, were only the minor consequences of his skill ; for, on one occasion, he contrived that almost half the folk of the town should be cited, either as panels or witnesses, to the circuit court of Inverness ; where, through the wrongheadedness of a jury, and the obstinacy of a judge, a good townsman, and powerful combatant, who would willingly harm no one, but who would fight with any body, ran a very considerable risk of being sent out to the plantations. The people were distressed beyond measure, and their old antagonists of Kilmuir and Rosemarkie fully avenged.

In course of time, however, they became better ac-

quainted with law ; and their knowledge of the lawyer, (which, like every other species of knowledge, was progressive) while it procured him, in its first stages, much employment, prevented him, latterly, from being employed at all. He was one of the most active of village attorneys. No one was better acquainted with the whole art of recovering a debt, or of entering on the possession of a legacy,—of reclaiming property, or of conveying it ; but it was ultimately discovered that his own particular interests could not always be identified with those of the people who employed him ; and that the same lawsuit might be gained by him, and lost by his client. It was one thing, too, for Macculloch to recover a debt, and quite another for the person to whom it had been due. In cases of the latter description he was quite an adept in the art of promising. Day after day would he fix his term of settlement ; though the violation of the promise of yesterday, proved only a prelude to the violation of that of to-day, and though both were found to be typical of the promise which was to be passed on the morrow. He had determined, it was obvious, to render his profession as lucrative as possible ; but somehow or other,—it could only be through an excess of skill,—he completely overshot the mark. No one would, at length, believe his promises, or trust to his professions ; his great skill began to border in its effects, as these regarded himself, on the opposite extreme ; and he was quite on the eve of being starved out of the place, when Sir George Mackenzie the proprietor, made choice of him as his factor, and entrusted to him the sole management of all his concerns.

Sir George, in his younger days, had been, like his grandfather the Earl, a stirring, active man of business. He was a staunch Tory, and on the downfall of Oxford, and the coming in of the Whigs, he continued to fret away the very energies of his character in a fruitless, splenetic opposition ; until, at length, losing heart in the contest, from being one of the most active, he became one of the most indolent men in the country. He drank hard, lived grossly, and seemed indifferent to every thing. And never were there two persons better suited to each other than the lawyer and Sir George. The lawyer was always happiest in his calculations when his books were open to the inspection of no one but himself ; and the laird, though he had a habit of reckoning over the bottle, commonly fell asleep before the amount was cast up. An untoward destiny, however, proved too hard for Macculloch in even this office. Apathetical as Sir George was deemed, there was one of his feelings which had survived the wreck of all the others ;—that one a rooted aversion to the town of Cromarty, and in particular to that part of the country adjacent, which was his own property. No one,—least of all himself, could assign any cause for this aversion, but it existed and grew stronger every day ; and the consequences were ruinous to Macculloch ; for in a few years after he had appointed him to the factorship, he disposed of all his lands to a Mr. William Urquhart of Meldrum ; a transaction which is said to have had the effect of converting his antipathy into regret. The factor set himself to seek out for another master ; and in a manner agreeable to his character. He professed

much satisfaction that the estate should have passed into the hands of so excellent a gentleman as Mr. Urquhart ; and proposed to some of the townsfolks that they should eat to his prosperity in a public dinner, and light up a constellation of bonfires on the heights which overlook the bay. The proposal took ; the dinner was attended by a party of the more respectable inhabitants, and the bonfires by all the children.

A sister of Sir George's, the Lady Margaret, who a few years before had shared in the hopes and principles of her cousin, Lord Cromartie, and who had witnessed, with no common sensation of grief, the disastrous termination of the enterprize in which he had been led to engage, was at this time the only tenant of Cromarty Castle. She had resided in the house of Lord George previous to his attainder, but, on that event, she had come to Cromarty to live with her brother. His low habits of intemperance proved to her a fruitful source of vexation ; but how was the feeling deepened when in about a week after he had set out on a hasty journey, the purpose of which he refused to explain, she received a letter from him, informing her that he had sold all his lands. She saw, in a step so rash and unadvised, the final ruin of her family, and felt with peculiar bitterness that she had no longer a home. Leaning over a window of the castle, she was indulging in the feelings her circumstances suggested, and looking with an unavailing but natural regret, on the fields and hamlets which had so soon become the property of a stranger, when Macculloch and his followers came marching out on

the lawn below from the adjoining wood, and began to pile on a little eminence in front of the castle the materials of a bonfire. It seemed, from the effect produced on the poor lady, that it was only necessary entirely to overpower her, that she should be shewn that the circumstance which was so full of distress to her, was an occasion of rejoicing to others. For a few seconds she seemed stupified by the shouts and exultations of the party below ; and then clasping her hands upon her breast, she burst into tears and hurried to her apartment. As the evening darkened into night, the light of the huge fire without was reflected through a window on the curtains of her bed. She requested her attendant to shut it out ; but the wild shouts of Macculloch's followers, which were echoed until an hour after midnight by the turrets above, and the vaults below, could not be excluded. In the morning Lady Margaret was in a high fever, and in a few days after she was dead.

The first to welcome the new laird to his property was Macculloch the factor. Urquhart of Meldrum, or Captain Urquhart, as he was termed, had made his money on sea,—some said as the master of an Indian-man, some as the captain of a Privateer. He was a rough unpolished man, fond of a rude joke, and disposed to seek his companions among farmers and mechanics, rather than among the people of a higher sphere. But with all his rudeness, he was shrewd and intelligent, and qualified, by a peculiar tact, to be a judge of men. When Macculloch was shewn into his room, he neither returned his bow nor motioned him to a seat, though the lawyer, no way

daunted, proceeded to address him in a long train of compliments and congratulations. "Humph," replied the captain. "Ah," thought the lawyer, "you will at least hear reason." He proceeded to state, that as he had been entrusted with the sole management of Sir George's affairs, he was better acquainted than any one else with the resources of the estate, and the character of the tenants, and that should Mr. Urquhart please to continue him in his office, he would convince him he was the fittest person to occupy it to his advantage. "Humph," replied the captain, "for how many years, Sir lawyer, have you been factor to Mackenzie?"—"For about five," was the reply. "And was he not a good master?"—"Yes, sir, rather good, certainly,—but his unfortunate habits"—"His habits;—he drunk grog, did he not? and served it out for himself?—Mark me, Sir factor; you are a——mean rascal, and shall never finger a penny of mine. You found in Mackenzie a good simple fellow, who employed you when no one else would; but no sooner had he unshipped himself, than you hoisted colours for me,——you, whom, I suppose, you could tie up to the yard-arm for somewhat less than a bred hangman would tie up a thief for;—aye, that you could. I have heard of your dinner, sir, and your bonfires, and of the death of Lady Margaret, (had you another bonfire for that?) and now tell you once for all, that I despise you as one of the meanest——rascals that ever turned tail on a friend in distress. Off, sir,——here is the door." Such was the reward of Macculloch. In a few years after he had sunk into poverty and contempt;—one instance of many that ras-

cality, however profitable in the degree, may be carried into a ruinous extreme, and that he who sets out with a determination of cheating every one, may at length prove too cunning for even himself.

The people of the town, not excepting some of those who had shouted round the bonfires and sat down to the dinner, were much gratified by the result of Macculloch's application; and for some time the laird was so popular, that there was no party in opposition to him. An incident soon occurred, however, which had the effect of uniting nine-tenths of the whole parish into a confederacy, so powerful and determined, that it contended with him in a law-suit for three whole years.

The patronage of the church of Cromarty, on the attainder of Lord George Mackenzie, in whom it had been vested, devolved upon the Crown. It was claimed, however, by Captain Urquhart, and the Crown, unacquainted with the extent of many of the privileges derived to it by the general forfeiture of the late Rebellion, and of this privilege among the others, seemed no way inclined to dispute the claim. He, therefore, nominated to the parish, on the first vacancy, a Mr. Simpson of Meldrum, as a proper minister. This Meldrum was a property of Mrs. Urquhart's, and the chief qualification of Mr. Simpson arose from the circumstance of his having been born on it. The captain himself was a Papist, and had not set a foot within the church of Cromarty since he had come to the estate; his wife was an Episcopalian, and more liberal than her husband, she had on one occasion attended it, in honour of the wedding of a favourite

maid. The people of the town, in the opinion that the presentation could not be in worse hands, and dissatisfied with the presentee, rejected the latter on the ground that Captain Urquhart was not the legitimate patron ; and, binding themselves by contract, they subscribed a considerable sum that they might join issue with him in a lawsuit. They were, besides, assisted by the neighbouring parishes ; and, after a tedious litigation, the suit was decided in their favour ; but not until they had expended upon it, as I have frequently heard affirmed with much exultation, the then enormous sum of five hundred pounds. They received from the Crown their choice of a minister.

Urquhart, whose obstinacy, sufficiently marked at any time, had been roused by the struggle into one of its most determined attitudes, resisted the claims of the people until the last ; and, when he could no longer dictate to them as a patron, he set himself to try whether he could not influence them as a landlord. A day was fixed for the parishioners to meet in the church, that they might avail themselves of the gift of the Crown, by making choice of a minister ; and, before it arrived, the captain made the round of his estate, visiting his tenants and dependants, and every one whom he had either obliged or had the power of obliging, with the intention of forming a party to vote for Mr. Simpson. All his influence, however, proved insufficient to accomplish his object. His tenants preserved either a moody silence when he urged them to come into his plans, or replied to his arguments, which savoured sadly of temporal interests, in rude homilies about liberty of conscience and the rights of

the people. Urquhart was not naturally a very patient man ; he had been trained, too, in a rough school ; and, long before he had accomplished the purposed round, he had got into one of his worst moods. His arguments had been converted into threats, and his threats were met by sturdy defiances. In the evening of this vexatious day, he stood in front of the steadings of Roderick Ross of the Hill, a plain decent farmer, much beloved by the poor for the readiness with which he imparted to them of his substance ; and not a little respected by Urquhart himself for his rough strong sense and sterling honesty. A grey, weather-wasted headstone still marks out his grave, but of the cottage which he inhabited, of his garden fence, and the large gnarled elms which sprung out of it, of his barns, his cowhouses, and his sheepfolds, there is not a single vestige. They occupied, eighty years ago, the middle of one of the parks which are laid out on the hill of Cromarty, where it overlooks the town,—the third park in the upper range, from the eastern corner. In rainy seasons, the spring which supplied his well comes bursting out from among the furrows. Roderick came from the barn to meet the laird ; and, after the customary greeting, was informed of the cause of his visit. The merits of this cause he had discussed at mill and smithy, with every farmer on the estate ; and, with his usual bluntness, he now enquired at the laird what interest he, a Papist, could have in the concerns of a Protestant church. “ For observe, Captain,” said he, “ if ye ettle at serving us wi’ a minister, sound after your way o’ belief, I maun in conscience gie you a’ the hinderance I can, as the

man must be an unsound Papisher to me ; an' if, what's mair likely, ye just only wuss to oblige the callant Simpson wi' a glebe an' a manse, without meddling wi' ony religion, it's surely my part to oppose ye baith ;—you, for making God's kirk meat an' drink to a hireling, him for taking it on sic terms." The captain, though he used to admire Roderick's natural logic, regarded it with a very different feeling when he found it brandished against himself. "Roderick," said he, and he swore a deadly oath, "you shall either vote for Mr. Simpson, or quit your farm at Whitsunday first."—"You at least gie me my choice," said the honest farmer, and turning abruptly from him, he stalked into the barn.

Roderick left his plough in the furrow on the day fixed for the meeting, and went into the house to prepare for it, by dressing himself in his best clothes. His wife had learned the result of his conference with the laird, and in her opinion the argument of threatened ejection was a more powerful one than any that could be advanced by the opposite party. Repeatedly did she urge it, but to no effect ;—Roderick was stubborn as an old Covenanter. She watched, however, her opportunity ; and when he went in to dress, which he always did in a small apartment formed by an outjet of the cottage, she followed him as if once more to repeat what she had so often repeated already, but with a very different intention. She suffered him to throw off his clothes, piece by piece, without the slightest attempt to prevent him ; but at the moment when his head and arms were involved in the intricacies of a stout linen shirt, she snatched up his holiday

bonnet, coat, and waistcoat, together with the articles of dress he had just relinquished, and rushing out of the apartment with them, shut and bolted the door behind her. To place against it every article of furniture which the outer room afforded, was the work of the first minute, and to advise her liege lord to betake himself to the bed which his prison contained, until the kirk should have *skailed*, was her employment in the second. Roderick was not to be baulked so. There was a window in the apartment which, had the walls been of stone, would scarcely have afforded a passage to an ordinary-sized cat, but luckily they were of turf. Into this opening, he insinuated first his head, next his shoulders, and wriggling from side to side until the whole wall heaved with the commotion, he wormed himself into liberty ; and then set off for the church of Cromarty, without bonnet, coat, or waistcoat. An angry man was Roderick ; and the anger which he well knew would gain him nothing if wreaked on the gudewife, was boiling up against the captain and Mr. Simpson. He entered the church, and in a moment every eye in it was turned on him. The schoolmaster, a thin serious-looking person, sat in the precenter's desk, with his writing materials before him, to take down the names of the voters, hundreds of whom thronged the body of the church. Captain Urquhart, in an attitude between sitting and standing, occupied one of the opposite pews ; about half a dozen of his servants lounged behind him. He was a formidable-looking, dark-complexioned, square-shouldered man, of about fifty ; and over his harsh, weather-beaten features, which

were in some little degree the reverse of engaging at any time, the occasion of the meeting seemed to have flung a darker expression than was common to them. As Roderick advanced, he started up as if to reconnoitre so terrible an apparition. Roderick's shirt and breeches were stained by the damp mouldy turf of the window, his face had not escaped, and instead of being marked by its usual expression of quiet good nature, it had a portentous ferocity, which seemed to indicate a man not rashly to be meddled with. "In the name of wonder, what brings you here in such a plight?" was the question put to him by an acquaintance in the aisle. "I come here," said Roderick, in a voice sufficiently audible all over the building, "to gie my vote as a free member o' the kirk, in the election o' this day; an' as for the particular plight," lowering his tone into a whisper, "speer o' that at the gude-wife."—"And whom do you vote for?" said the schoolmaster, "for the time is up;—there are two candidates, Simpson and Henderson."—"For honest Mr. Henderson," said the farmer, "an' ill be his luck this day who votes for ae Roman out o' the fear o' anither, or lets the luvie o' warld's gear stan' atween him an' his conscience." The captain grasped his stick; Roderick clenched his fist. "Look ye, Captain," he continued, "after flinging awa, for the sake o' the puir kirk, the bonny riggs o' Drumonorie, an' I ken I have done it, ye needna think to daunt me wi' a kent. Come out, Captain, yoursel, or any twa o' your gang, an' in this quarrel I shall bide the warst. Nay, man, glower as ye list; I'm no obliged to be feart though ye choose to be angry." The shout of

“No Popish patron—no Popish patron,” which shook the very roof that stretched over the heads of the hundreds who joined in it, served as a kind of chorus to this fearless defiance. The Captain suffered his stick to slip through his fingers, until the knob rested on his palm, and then striding over the pew, he walked out of church. In less than half an hour after, the popular candidate was declared duly elected, and at Whitsunday first Roderick was ejected from his farm. His character, however, as a man of probity, and a skilful farmer, was so well established throughout the country, that he suffered less on the occasion than almost any other person would have done. He died many years after, the tacksman of Peddieston, possessed of ingear and outgear, and a very considerable sum of money, with which he had the temerity to intrust a new-fangled kind of money borrower, termed a bank.

After all they had achieved and all they had suffered on this occasion, the people of Cromarty were unfortunate in their minister. He was a person of considerable talent, and an amiable disposition ; and beloved by every class of his parishioners. The young spoke well of him for his good nature, and the old for the deference which he paid to the opinions of his lay advisers. He was, besides, deeply read in theology, and acquainted with the various workings of religion in the various constitutions of mind. But of all his friends and advisers, there were none sufficiently acquainted with his character to give him the advice which he most needed. He was naturally amiable and unassuming, and when he became a convert to Christ-

ianity, scarcely any change took place in his external conduct. He continued to act from principle in the manner he had previously acted from the natural bent of his disposition. For the first few years he was much impressed by a sense of the importance of spiritual concerns ; and he became a minister of the church that he might press their importance upon others ; but there are ebbs and flows of the mind in its moral as certainly as in its intellectual operations ; and that flow of zeal which characterizes the young convert, is very often succeeded by a temporary ebb, during which he sinks into comparative indifference. It was thus with Henderson. His first impressions became faint, and he continued to walk the round of his duties, rather from their having become matters of custom to him, and that it was necessary for him to maintain the character of being consistent, than from a due sense of their importance. He continued, too, to instruct his people by delineations of character and expositions of doctrine ; but his knowledge of the first was the result of studies which he had ceased to prosecute, and in which he himself had been both the student and the thing studied, and the efficacy of the latter was neutralized by their having become to him less the objects of serious belief than of metaphysical speculation. His peculiar character, too, with all its seeming advantages of natural constitution, was perhaps as much exposed to evil as others of a less amiable stamp. There are passions and dispositions so unequivocally bad, that even indifference itself is roused to oppose them, but when the current of nature and the course of duty seem to run parallel, we suffer

ourselves to be borne away by the stream, and are seldom watchful to ascertain whether the parallelism be alike exact in every stage of our progress. Henderson's character precluded both suspicion and advice. What were the feelings of his people, when, on summoning the elders of the church, he told them, that having formed an improper connection with a girl of the place, he had become a disgrace to the order to which he belonged. He was expelled from his office, and, after remaining in town until a neighbouring clergyman had dealt to him the censures of the church, from the pulpit which he himself had lately occupied, and in presence of a congregation which had once listened to him with pleasure, and now beheld him with tears, he went away, no one knew whither, and was never again seen in Cromarty.

About twenty years after, a young lad, a native of the place, was journeying, after nightfall, between Elgin and Banff, when he was joined by two persons who were travelling in the same direction, and entered into conversation with them. One of them seemed to be a plain country farmer ; the other was evidently a man of education and breeding. The farmer, with a curiosity deemed characteristic of Scotchmen of a certain class, questioned him about the cause of his journey, and his place of residence ; the other seemed less curious ; but no sooner had he learned that he was a native of Cromarty, than he became the more inquisitive of the two ; and his numberless inquiries regarding the people of the town, showed that at some period he had been intimately acquainted with them. But many of those after whom he inquired, had been

long dead, or had removed from the place years before. The lad, whose curiosity was excited, was mustering up courage to ask him whether he had not at some time or other resided in Cromarty, when the stranger, hastily seizing his hand with the cordiality of an old friend, bade him farewell, and turning off at a cross road, left him to the company of the farmer. "Who is that gentleman?" was his first question. "The Mr. Henderson," was the reply, "who at one time was minister of Cromarty." The lad learned further, that he supported himself as a country schoolmaster, and was a devout excellent man, charitable and tender to others, but severe to himself beyond the precedents of Reformed churches. "I wish," said the farmer, "you had seen him by day. He has the grey locks and bent frame of old age, though he is not yet turned of fifty. There is a hill in a solitary part of the country on which he frequently spends the long winter nights in prayer and meditation. A little below the summit there is a path which runs quite round the hill, and which can be seen a full mile away, that has been hollowed out by his feet."

CHAPTER XXII.

O many are the poets that are sown
 By Nature ; men endowed with highest gifts,
 The vision and the faculty divine,
 Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse.

WORDSWORTH.

DURING even the early part of last century, there were a few of the mechanics of Cromarty conversant, in some little degree with books and the pen. They had their libraries, of from ten to twenty volumes, of sermons and controversial divinity, purchased at auctions, or from the booksellers of the south ; and I have seen letters and diaries written by them which would have done no discredit to the mechanics of a more literary age. Donald Sandison's library consisted of nearly a hundred volumes ; and his son, whom I remember a very old man, and who at one time had been the friend and companion of the unfortunate Ferguson, had made so good a use of his opportunities of improvement, that in his latter days, when his sight had begun to fail him, he used to bring with him to church a copy of Beza's Latin New Testament, which happened to be printed in a clearer type than his English one. The people in general, however, were little acquainted with the better literary models. So late as the year 1750, a copy of Milton's Paradise

Lost, which had been brought to town by a sailor, was the occasion of much curious criticism among them ; some of them alleging that it was heterodox, and ought to be burnt, others deeming it prophetic ; one man affirmed it to be a romance, another said it was merely a poem ; but a Mr. Thomas Hood, a shop-keeper of the place, set the matter at rest, by remarking, that it seemed to him to be a great book, full of mystery, like the Revelations of St. John, but certainly no book for the reading of simple unlearned people like him or them. And yet, at even this period, Cromarty had its makers of books and writers of verses ; men of a studious imitative turn,—prototypes in some respects of those provincial poets of our own times, who became famous for nearly half an age in almost an entire county. A few brief notices of the more remarkable of my townsmen of this first class, may prove not unacceptable to the reader ; for, of all imitators, the poetical imitator is the most eccentric ;—though his verses be imitations, his character is an original.

On the southern shore of the bay of Cromarty, about two miles to the west of the town, there stood, ninety years ago, a meal mill, and the cottage of the miller. The road leading to the country passed in front, between the mill and the beach ; a ridge of low hills, intersected by deep narrow ravines, and covered with bushes of birch and hazel, rose directly behind.—A straggling line of alders marked the course of the stream that turned the mill wheel ; two gigantic elms, which rose out of the fence of a little garden, spread their arms over the cottage. The view of the neighbouring

farm-steadings was shut out by the windings of the shore, and the ledge behind ; and, to the traveller who passed along the road in front, and saw no other human dwelling nearer him than the little speck-like houses which mottled the opposite shore of the bay, this one seemed to occupy one of the most secluded spots in the parish. Its inmates, at this period, were John Williamson, the miller, or, as he was more commonly termed, Johnie o' the shore, and his sister Margaret,—two of the best and most eccentric people of their day in the country side. John was a poet and a Christian, and much valued by all the serious and all the intelligent people of the place ; his sister, who was remarkable in the little circle of her acquaintance, for the acuteness of her judgment in nice points of divinity, was scarcely less esteemed.

The duties of John's profession left him much leisure to write and to pray. During the droughts of summer, his mill pond would be dried up for months together ; and in these seasons he used to retire almost every day to a green hillock in the vicinity of his cottage, which commands an extensive view of the bay and the opposite coast ; and there, in a grassy opening among the bushes, would he remain until sunset, with only the Bible and his pen for his companions. He was so much attached to this spot, that he has been heard to say there was no place in which he thought he could so patiently wait the Resurrection ; and he intimated to his friends his wish of being buried in it ; but, on his death-bed, he changed his mind, and requested to be laid beside his mother. It is now covered by a fir wood, and roughened by thickets of furze and juniper,

but enough may still be seen to justify his choice. On one side it descends somewhat abruptly into a narrow ravine, through the bottom of which there runs a little tinkling streamlet, on the other, it slopes gently towards the shore. We look on the one hand, and see through the chance vistas which have been opened in the wood, the country rising above us in long undulations of surface, like waves of the sea after a storm, and variegated with fields, hedge-rows, and clumps of copse wood. On the other, the wide expanse of the bay lies stretched at our feet, with all its winding shores, and blue jutting headlands: we look down on the rower as he passes, and hear the notes of his song, and the measured dash of his oars; and, when the winds are abroad, we see them travelling black over the water before they wave the branches that spread over our heads. Many of the poet's happiest moments were passed in the solitude of this retreat; and from the experience derived in it, though one of the most benevolent of men, and at times one of the most sociable, whenever he wished to be happy he sought to be alone. In going to church every Sabbath, instead of following the road, he used invariably to strike across the beach, and walk by the edge of the sea; and, on reaching the church-yard, he always retired into some solitary corner, to ponder in silence among the graves. To a person of so serious a cast, a life of solitude and self-examination cannot be a happy, unless it be a blameless one; and Johnie o' the shore was one of the rigidly just. Like the Pharisees, he tithed mint, and anise, and cumin, but, unlike the Pharisees, he did not neglect the weightier matters of the law. It is recorded

of him, that, on descending one evening from his hillock, he saw his only cow browsing on the grass plot of a neighbour, and that, after having her milked as usual, he despatched his sister with the milk to the owner of the grass.

Ninety years ago, the Press had not found its way into the north of Scotland, and the people were unacquainted with the scheme of publishing by subscription. The writings, therefore, of Johnie o' the shore, like those of the ancients before the invention of printing, existed only in manuscript; and, like these, too, they have suffered from the Goths. A closely written fragment of about eighty pages, which once composed part of a bulky quarto volume, is now all that survives of them, though, at his death, they formed of themselves a little library. One of the volumes, written wholly in prose, and which, it is said, detailed minutely all the incidents of his life, with his thoughts on God and Heaven, the world and himself, fell into the hands of a distant relative, who resided somewhere in Easter-Ross. It must have been no small curiosity in its way; and for some time I was flattered by the hope that it still existed, and might be recovered; but I have come to find that it has shared the fate of all his other volumes. The existing fragment is now in my possession. It bears date 1743, and is occupied mostly with hymns, catechisms, and prayers. His models for the hymns seem to have been furnished by our Scotch version of the Psalms; his catechisms were formed, some on the catechisms of Craig and the Palatine, some on that of the Assembly Divines; his prayers remind me of those which are still to be heard in the churches of our

northern parishes on "the day of the men." Some of his larger poems are alphabetical acrostics;—the first line of the first stanza of each, beginning with the letter A, and the first line in the last, with the letter Z. Most of them, however, and the fact is a singular one, for John and his sister were staunch Presbyterians, are commemorative of the festival days of the English church. There are hymns for Passion Friday, for Christ's Incarnation-day, for Circumcision-day, and for Christmas:—a proof that he must have had little in him of that abhorrence of Prelacy which characterized most of the Presbyterians of his time. And he seems, too, to have been of a more tolerating spirit; and, in the simple benevolence of his heart, to have come nearer the truth on some points than men who were more skilful reasoners, and more deeply learned. "There are some people," remarks the querist in one of his catechisms, "who say that those who have never heard of Christ cannot be saved? "It is surely not our business," is the reply, "to search into the deep things of God, except so far as he is pleased to reveal them; and, as he has not revealed to us that he condemns all those who have not heard of Christ, it is rash to say so, and uncharitable besides."

One of the most curious poems in the manuscript, is a little piece entitled "An Imagination on the Thunder-claps." It was written before the discoveries of Franklin, and so the imagination is rather a wild one, —not wilder, however, than some of the soberest speculations of the ancients on the same phenomena. The green hillock, on this occasion, appears to have been both his Observatory and his Parnassus;—he

seems to have watched upon it every change of the heavens and earth, from the first rising of the thunder clouds, until they had broken into a deluge, and a blue sky looked down on the red tumbling of streams as they leaped over the ridges, or came rushing from out the ravines. Though quite serious himself, his uncouth phraseology will hardly fail in eliciting the smile of the reader.

AN IMAGINATION ON THE THUNDER-CLAPS.

Lo! pillars great of wat'ry clouds
On firmament appear,
And mounting up with curled heads,
Towards the north do steer.
East wind the same doth contradict,
And round and round they run ;
And earth and sea are dark below,
And blackness hides the sun.

Like wrestling tides that in the bay
Do bubble, boil, and foam,
When seas grow angry at the wind,
And boatmen long for home ;
Ev'n so the black and heavy clouds
Do fierce together jar,
They meet, and rage, and toss, and whirl,
And break, and broken are.

Up to the place where fire abides,
These wat'ry clouds have gone ;
And waters press upon the fire,
And fire the waters upon.
And lo the fire breaks through the cloud,
And clouds do raise their voice,
Like rivers toss'd o'er mighty rocks,
Or stormy ocean's noise.

They roar, and roll, and hills do shake,
And heavens do seem to rend ;
And should the fierce and shining fire
Down upon earth descend,
Like clay would be the hardest rocks,
Like flax the strongest brass,
And all the pride and strength of man
Like pride and strength of grass.

And now the broken clouds fall down
In *groff* rain from on high ;
And many streams do rise and roar,
That heretofore were dry.
And when the red speat will be o'er,
And wild storm pass'd away,
Rough stones will lie upon the fields,
And heaps of sand and clay.

But I with all my sins am spar'd,
These fields to turn and tread ;
Which surely had not been the case
If Jesus had not died.

Quod JOHNIE O' THE SHORE.

Johnie's sister Margaret (after his death she seems to have fallen heir to his title, for she then became Meggie o' the Shore) survived her brother for many years, and died at an extreme old age, about the year 1785. The mill, on its falling into other hands, was thrown down, and rebuilt a full half mile farther to the west, but the cottage was spared for Meggie. She had always been characterized by the extreme neatness of her dress, and her personal cleanliness, her taste in arranging the homely furniture of her cottage, and her hospitality : and now, though the death of her brother had rendered her as poor as it is possible for

a contented person to become, she was as much marked by her neatness, and as hospitable as ever. On one occasion, a christian friend who had come to visit her, was so charmed with her conversation, as to prolong his stay from noon until evening, when he rose to go away. She insisted on his waiting dinner; he accordingly sat down again; and a half cake of bread, and a jug of water, it was all her larder afforded, were set before him. It was the feast of the promise, she said, "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." Her circumstances, she added, were not quite so easy as they had been during the lifetime of her brother; but the change was perhaps for the better; for it had led her to think much oftener, when rising from one meal, that God had been so very kind to her as to pledge himself for the next.

Meggie lived in a credulous age, and she was one of the credulous herself. She heard, at times, like most of her acquaintance, the voices of spirits in the dash of waves and the roar of winds, and saw wraiths and dead lights; but she was naturally courageous, and had a strong reliance on Providence; and so, with all her credulity, she was not afraid to live alone, with, as she used to say, only God for neighbour. On a boisterous winter evening, two young girls who were travelling from the country to the town, were forced, by the breaking out of a snow storm to take shelter in her cottage. She received them with her wonted kindness, and entertained them as she had done her friend. They heard the waves thundering on the beach, and the wind howling in the woods, but peace and safety were with them at Meggie's fire side. About midnight

there was a pause in the storm, and they could hear strange sounds, like the cries of people in distress, mingling with the roar of the sea. "Raise the window curtain," said Meggie, "and look out." The terrified girls raised the curtain. "Do you see aught?" she enquired. "There is a bright light," said the girls, "in the middle of the bay of Udoll. It hangs over the water at about the height of a ship's mast; and we can see something below it like a boat riding at anchor, with the white sea raging round her."—"Now drop the curtain," she replied, "I am no stranger, my lassies, to sights and noises like these,—sights and noises of another world; but I have been taught that the Great Spirit is nearer to me than any other can be; and so have learned not to be afraid." A few nights after, as the story goes, a Cromarty yawl foundered in the bay of Udoll, and all on board perished.

Meggie was always a rigid Presbyterian, and jealous of innovations in the Church; and, as she advanced in years, she became more rigid, and more jealous. She is said to have regarded with no great reverence the young divines that filled up, in the parishes around her, the places of her departed cotemporaries; and who too often substituted, as she alleged, the learning which they had acquired at college, for a knowledge of the human heart and of the Bible. She could ill brook, too, any interference of the State in the concerns of the Kirk;—an Act of Parliament, when read from the pulpit, she deemed little better than blasphemy, and a King's fast a day desecrated above every other. Her zeal, in one unlucky instance, brought her in contact with the civil law. Her fa-

avourite preacher was a Mr. Porteous of Kilmuir, a divine of the old and deeply learned cast,—eloquent and pious, and thoroughly acquainted with the book of nature and of God. After hearing him deliver, in the church of Nigg, a powerful and impressive discourse, what was her horror and indignation when she saw him descending from the pulpit to read from the precentor's desk some Proclamation or Act of Council. Had he been less a favourite, or any body else than Mr. Porteous, she could have shut her ears and sat still ; as it was she sprung from her seat, and twitching the paper out of his hand, flung it to the floor and stamped upon it with her feet. She was instantly apprehended and sent to the jail of Tain ; but she found the jail a very comfortable sort of place, and, for the three days she was confined to it, she had for her visitors some of the best people in the country ; among the rest, Mr. Porteous himself, who had enough of the old Covenanter in him to feel that she had done only her duty, and that he had failed in his.

The story of her death is curious and affecting. A friend, in passing her cottage on a journey to the country, called in as usual to see her. She was as neatly dressed as ever, and the little apartment in which she sat was fastidiously clean ; but her countenance was of a deadly paleness, and there was an air of languor about her that seemed the effect of indisposition. “ You are unwell, Meggie ? ” said her friend. “ Not quite well, perhaps,” she replied, “ but I shall be so very soon. You must stay and take breakfast with me.” The visitor knew too well the value of one of Meggie's breakfasts to refuse ; and the simple

fare which her cottage afforded was set before him ; but he was disappointed of the better part of the repast ; for she spoke but little, and seemed unable to eat. “ God has been exceedingly good to me,” she remarked, as she rose when he had eaten, to replace in her cupboard the viands which still remained before him,—“ with no one to provide for me but Himself, I have not known what it was to want a meal since the death of my brother.—You return this way in the evening ?” said she, addressing her friend. He replied in the affirmative. “ Then promise that you will not pass without coming to see me : I am indisposed at present, but I feel, nay, am certain, that you will find me quite well. Do promise.” Her friend promised, and set out on his journey. Twilight had set in before his return. He raised the latch and entered her apartment, where all was silent, and the fire dying on the hearth. In a window, which opened to the west, sat Meggie, with her brother’s Bible lying open before her, and her face turned upwards. The faint light of evening shone full on her features, and their expression seemed to be that of a calm yet joyous devotion. “ I have returned, Meggie,” said the man after a pause of a few minutes. There was no answer. “ I have returned, Meggie,” he reiterated, “ and have come to see you, to redeem my promise.” Still there was no answer. He went up to her and found she was dead.

About twenty years after her death, the grave in which she had been buried was opened to admit the corpse of a distant relative. A woman of my acquaintance, and who was then a little girl, was at play

at the time among the stones of the churchyard ; but, on seeing an elderly female, a person much of Meggie's cast of character, go up to the grave, she went up to it too. She saw the woman looking anxiously at the bones, and there was one scull in particular which seemed much to engage her attention. It still retained a few locks of silvery hair, and over the hair there were the remains of a linen cap fastened on by two pins. She stooped down, and drawing out the pins, put them up carefully in a small case, which she then thrust into her bosom. " Not death itself shall part us," she muttered, as if addressing herself to the pins ;—" you shall do for me what you have done for Meggie o' the Shore."

But, in holding this *tête-a-tête* with Meggie, I have suffered myself to lose sight of the poets, and must now return to them. Next in the list to Johnie o' the Shore, is David Henderson, a native of Cromarty, who was born sometime in the early part of the last century, and died in the beginning of the present. He was one of that interesting class, concerning whom nature and fortune seem at variance ; the one marking them out for a high, the other for a low destiny. They are fitted, by the gifts of mind bestowed upon them by the one, to think and act both for themselves and others ; and then flung by the other into some obscure lumber corner of the world, where these gifts prove useless to them at best, and not unfrequently serve only to encumber them. From Nature, David received talents of a cast very superior to those which she commonly bestows ; by Fortune, he was placed in one of the obscurest walks of life, and prevented

from ever quitting it. He acquired his little education when employed in tending a flock of sheep ; the herd-boys with whom he associated taught him to read, and he learned to write by imitating the letters of one of the copy-books used in schools, upon the smooth flat stones which he found on the sea-shore.

From his earliest years, his life was one of constant toil. He was a herd-boy in his seventh, and a ploughman in his sixteenth year. He was then indentured to a mason, and he soon became one of the most skilful workmen in this part of the country ; especially in hewing tombstones and engraving epitaphs. There is not a churchyard within ten miles of Cromarty, in which there may not be seen some of his inscriptions. His heart was an affectionate one, and open to love and friendship ; and when he had served his apprenticeship, and began to be known as a young man of superior worth, and a good clear head, his company was much courted by the better sort of people. In his twenty-fifth year he became attached to a young girl of Cromarty, named Ann Watson, who was much celebrated in her day for her charms, both personal and mental. She was beautiful to admiration, rationally, yet fervently pious, and possessed of a mind at once powerful and delicate. It was no wonder that David should love such a one ; and, as no disparity of condition formed an obstacle to the union,—as she was a woman of sense and he a man of merit, in all probability she would have made him happy. But, alas ! in the bloom of youth and odour of virtue she was taken from him by that insidious disease, which, while it preys on the vitals of its victims, renders

their appearance more interesting ; as if to make their loss the more regretted. She died of consumption ; and David was left behind to mourn over her grave ; and, when his grief had settled into a calm melancholy, to write a pretty, simple, ballad-like elegy to her memory. I have heard my mother say, that it was left by David at the grave of his mistress, where it was afterwards picked up by a person who gave copies of it to several of his acquaintance ; but I do not know that any of these are now to be found. I have failed in recovering more than a few stanzas of it ; and these I took down as they were repeated to me by my mother, who had committed them to memory when a child. They may prove interesting, detached as they are, to such of my readers as love to contemplate a fine genius wrapt up in the dishabille of an imperfect education. Besides,—the writer, it is evident, was not an insulated individual, but one of a class. The unknown authors of some of our admired old ballads, such as Chevy-Chase, Edom o' Gordon, Gilmoreice, and the Bonny Earl of Moray, were, it is probable, men of similar acquirements, and a resembling cast of intellect.

ELEGY

ON THE DEATH OF A YOUNG WOMAN.

She's slain by death, that spareth none,
An object worthy love ;
And for her sake was many a sigh,—
No doubt she's now above.

*

*

*

In dress she loved to be neat,
In handsome trim would go ;
She loved not to be above
Her station, nor below.

* * *

But, in brief sentence, to have done
Of all I have to say,—
In midst of all her prospects here,
She on a death-bed lay.

And when she on a death-bed lay,
To her were visits made
By good and reverend elders, who
In her great pleasure had.

For she, though in her pleasant youth,
When time speeds sweetly by,
Esteem'd it, trusting in her God,
A blessed thing to die.

And she their questions unto them
Who sought her state to know,
Did answer wisely every one,
In pleasant words and low.

* * *

Her lyke-wake it was piously spent
In social prayer and praise,
Performed by judicious men,
Who stricken were in days.

And many a heavy, heavy heart,
Was in that mournful place ;
And many a weary, weary thought,
On her who slept in peace.

And then the townsfolks gather'd all
To bear her corpse away,
And bitter tears by young and old,
Were shed that mournful day.

And sure, if townsfolks grieved were,
Sore grieve may I and pine ;
They much deplored their heavy loss,
But what was theirs to mine !

For her loved voice, I only hear
Winds o'er her dust that sigh ;
For her sweet smile, I only see
The dead grass waving high.

And I no option have but think
How I am left alone ;
With none on earth to care for me,
Since she who cared is gone.

* * *

She was the first that ever I
In beauty's bloom did see,
Departing from the stage of time,
Into eternity.

O may her sex her imitate,
Example from her take,
And strive to gain the day of grace,
And wicked ways forsake.

David survived his mistress for more than forty years. For thirty of these he was an elder of the church ;—a man conversant with death-beds, and a visitor of the fatherless and the widow. Few persons die so regretted as David died, or leave behind them so fair a name. The reader will hardly fail of recognising something uncommon in his character, when I tell him that he was steady and prudent, though a poet, and of a grave deportment, good-natured, and a Christian, though of a ready wit. He left behind him, treasured up in the memories of his many

friends, shrewd, pithy remarks on men and things,—specimens of mind, if I may so express myself, which exhibit the quality of the mass from off which they were struck. His wit, too, was equally popular ; I have heard some of his bon-mots repeated, and laughed at more than twenty years after his death ; but his writings have been so much less fortunate, that I have found few of the people with whom I have conversed concerning him, who even knew that he made verses, though none of them were ignorant of his having been a good man.

The last of the Cromarty poets who lived and wrote before the beginning of the present century, was Macculloch of Dunloth. He was, for nearly sixty years, a society schoolmaster in that parish of Sutherlandshire, whose name, for some cause or other, is always attached to his own. But I shall attempt introducing him to the reader in the manner in which he has been introduced to myself.

“ About twenty-eight years ago,” said my informant, “ I resided, for a few weeks, with the late Dr. R——, at the manse of Kiltearn. I was lounging one evening beside the front door, when a singular-looking old man came up to me, and asked for the Doctor. He was such an equivocal-looking sort of person, that it was quite a puzzle to me whether I should show him into the parlour ;—he might be little better than a beggar, he might be worth half a million ; but whether a rich man or a poor one, no one could look at him and doubt of his being a *particular* man. He was very little, and very much bent, with just such a grotesque cast of countenance as I have seen carved on the

head of a walking stick. His outer man was cased in an old fashioned suit of raven grey, and he had immense plated buckles in his shoes and his breeches. I thought of the legend of the seven sleepers, and wondered where this fragment of the old world could have lain for the last hundred years.—The Doctor relieved me from my perplexity. He had seen us from a window, and, coming out, he welcomed the little old man with his wonted cordiality, and ushered him into the parlour as the poet of Dunloth.

“He staid with us that evening, and never was there a gayer evening spent in the manse. The Doctor had the art of eliciting all that was eccentric in his character, and that was not a little. He plied him with compliments and jokes, and rallied him on his love adventures and his poetry. The old man seemed swelling like a little toad, only it was with conceit, not venom. He chuckled, every now and then, at the more piquant of the Doctor’s good things, with a strange unearthly gaiety that seemed to savour of another world,—of another age at least; and then he would jest and compliment in turn. What he said was, to be sure, great nonsense, but then it was the most original nonsense that might be; full of small conceits and quibbles; and so old fashioned that we all felt it could not be other than the identical nonsense that flourished in the early days of our great-grandmothers. The young people were all delighted,—the little old man seemed delighted too, and laughed as heartily as any of us. Mrs. R——, when a young lady, had been eminently beautiful, and the poet had celebrated her in a song. It was a miserable composition, and

some of his neighbours, who wrote nearly as ill as himself, made it the occasion of a furious attack upon him. There were remarks, replies, and rejoinders beyond number ; until, at length, by mere dint of perseverance, the poet silenced all his opponents, and took to himself the credit of having gained a signal victory. The Doctor brought up this story, and got him to repeat all the replies and rejoinders, which he did with much glee.—Next morning he took leave of us, and I never again saw the poet of Dunloth.”

Macculloch, as I have stated, was a native of the parish of Cromarty, and passed the greater part of a long life as a Society schoolmaster, on a salary of twelve pounds per annum. Out of this pittance he contrived to furnish himself with a library, which, among other works of value, contained the whole of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Though full of compliment and gallantry in his younger days, he was, for the last forty years of his life, so thoroughly a woman-hater, that he would not suffer one of the sex to enter his cottage, cook his victuals, or wash his linen. His wardrobe consisted of four suits,—one of black, one of brown, one of raven grey, and one of tartan ; and he wore them week about, without suffering a piece of any one suit to encroach on the week of another. It has been told me that, in his eightieth year, he attended the dispensation of the sacrament in the Highland parish of Lairg, dressed in his tartans,—kilt, hose, and bonnet.—I do not well know whether to consider his singularities as those of the rhymers,—the most eccentric of all men, or his predilection for rhyming as merely one of his singularities. His compositions

were mostly satirical ; but his only art of satire, was the art of calling names in rhyme ; and he seems to have had no positive pleasure in bestowing these, but to have flung them just like so many missiles, and as he used to do his tawse when in school, at the heads of all who offended him. His death took place about twenty years ago. I subjoin two of the “ pas-quils” pointed against him in his war with his brother rhymers, and the pieces in which he replied to them. They may shew, should they serve no other purpose, what marvellous bad verses could be written in the classical age of Johnson and Goldsmith, and with what justice Dunloth piqued himself on having vanquished his opponents.

TO DUNLOTH.

Dunloth, be wise, take my advice,
Silence thy muse in time,
For thy thick scull it is too dull
To speak in prose or rhyme.
But if thy pride will still thee guide,
To sing thy horrid lays,
For any sake, my counsel take,
And ne’er attempt to praise.
Thy wit’s too low, thyself says so,
In this we both agree ;
The Kilmote flower is, I am sure,
A theme too high for thee.

ANSWER.

To notice much base trash as such,
I think it were a crime ;
Or yet to stoop, thou nincompoop,
For thy poor paltry rhyme.

Thy saucy gee shows thee to be
Like a blind muzzled mole ;
Or like a rat chas'd by the cat
To a dark muddy hole.
The first time I thy place pass by,
For thy poetic lesson,
Thoult crouch, be sure, behind the door,
Like a poor yelping messan.

TO ———

How hard is thy lot fair flower of Kilmote,
To be sung by a poet so dull ;
Thy symmetry fine is a theme too divine,
For a blockhead with such a thick scull.

ANSWER.

So hard is thy lot poor scurrilous sot,
Thy poetry brought thee to shame ;
So high to aspire, thou'rt thrust in the mire,
And laugh'd at by all for the same.

CHAPTER XXIII.

—— He heard amazed, on every side,
 His church insulted, and her priests belied,
 The laws reviled, the ruling powers abused,
 The land derided, and her foes excused,
 He heard and pondered. What to men so vile
 Should be his language? For his threatening style
 They were too many. If his speech were meek,
 They would despise such vain attempts to speak :
 —— These were reformers of each different sort.

CRABBE.

IN former times people knocked one another on the head for the sake of their masters,—fellows whom they had made too great to care at all about them ; in the present age they have become so much wiser that they quarrel on their own behalf alone. An entire people might be regarded in the past as an immense engine with, perhaps, a single mind for its moving power ; we may now compare every petty district to a magazine stored like the warehouse of a watchmaker with little detached machines, each one furnished with a moving power of its own. But though politics and party spirit change almost every ten years, human nature is always the same ;—aspects vary, and circumstances alter, but the active principle through all its windings, and amid all its disguises, is ever consistent with itself.

The people of Cromarty who lived ninety years ago were quite as unskilled in politics as their neighbours,

and thought as little for themselves. They were but the wheels and pinions of an immense engine ; and regarding their governors as men sent into the world to rule,—themselves, as men born to obey, they troubled their heads no more with the matter. Even the two Rebellions had failed of converting them into politicians ; for, viewing these in only their connexion with religion, they exulted in the successes of Hanover as those of Protestantism, and identified the cause of the Stewarts with Popery and persecution. Their Whiggism was a Whiggism of the future world only ; and the liberty of preparing themselves for Heaven was the only liberty they deemed worth fighting for.

Principles such as these, and the dominancy of the Protestant interest, rendered the people of Cromarty, for two whole reigns, as quiet subjects as any in the kingdom. In latter times, too, there was a circumstance which thoroughly attached them to the government, by shutting out from among them the Radicalism of modern times for wellnigh a whole age. The Scotch, early in the reign of George III., had risen high at court ;—Earl Bute had become Premier, and Mansfield Lord Chief Justice ; and the English, who would as lief have witnessed the return of William and his Normans, grumbled exceedingly. The Premier managed his business like most other premiers ;—the Chief Justice conducted his rather better than most other chief justices ; but both gentlemen, says Smollett “ had the misfortune of being born natives of North Britain ; and this very circumstance was, in the opinion of the people, more than sufficient to counterbalance all the good qualities which human

nature could possess." Junius, and Wilkes, and Churchill, and hundreds more, who, with as much ill nature, but less wit, were forgotten as soon as the public ceased to be satisfied with ill nature alone, opened in full cry against the King, the Ministry, and the Scotch. The hollo reached Cromarty, and the townsfolks were told, with all the rest of their countrymen, that they were proud, and poor, and dirty, and not very honest, and that they had sold their King;—all this, too, as if they hadn't known the whole of it before. Now it so happened, naturally enough I suppose, that they could bear to be dirty, but not to be told of it, and poor, but not to be twitted with their poverty, and that they could be quite as angry as either Junius or Churchill, though they could neither write letters like the one, nor make verses like the other. And angry they were,—desperately angry at Whiggism and the English, and devotedly attached to the King, poor man, who was suffering so much for his attachment to the Scotch. Nothing could come amiss to them from so thorough a friend to their country; and when, on any occasion, they could not wholly defend his measures, they contented themselves with calling him an honest man.

On came the ill-fated, ill-advised American War, and found the people of Cromarty as loyal as ever. Washington, they said, was a rascal, Franklin an ill-bred mechanic, and the people of the United States rebels to a man. There was a ballad, the composition of some provincial poet of this period, which narrated, in very rude verse, the tragical death of two brothers, natives of Ross-shire, who were killed unwittingly by their

father, a soldier of the Republic ; and this simple ballad did more for the cause of King among the people of Cromarty, than all the arguments in Locke could have done for that of the Americans ;—there was not an old woman in either town or parish who did not thoroughly understand it. The unfortunate father, Donald Munro, had emigrated to America, says the ballad, many years before ; leaving his two infant sons with his brother, a farmer of Ross-shire. The children had shot up into active young men, when the war broke out ; and, unable to pay for their passage, had enlisted into a regiment destined for the colonies, in the hope of meeting with their father. They landed in America ; and finding themselves one evening, after a long and harassing march, within a few miles of the place where he resided, they set out together to pay him a visit ; but in passing through a wood on their way, they were shot at from among the trees, and with so fatal an aim that the one was killed, and the other mortally wounded. A stout elderly man, armed with a double barrell'd rifle, came pressing towards them through the bushes, as a fowler would to the game he had just knocked down. It was their father, Donald Munro ; and the ballad concludes with the ravings of his horror and despair on ascertaining the nature of his connexion with his victims, blent with the wild expressions of his grief and remorse for having joined in so unnatural a rebellion.

Even in this age, however, as if to show that there can be nothing completely perfect that has human nature in it, Cromarty had its one Whig ;—a person who affirmed that Franklin was a philosopher, and

Washington a good man, and that the Americans were very much in the right. Could any thing be more preposterous? The townsfolks lacked patience to reason with a fellow so amazingly absurd. He was a slater, and his name was John Holm;—a name which became so proverbial in the place for folly, that, when any one talked very great nonsense, it was said of him that he talked like John Holm. The very children, who had carried the phrase with them to the play ground and the school, used to cut short the fudge of a comrade, or, at times, even some unpopular remark of the master, with a “ho! ho! John Holm!” John, however, held stiffly to his opinions, and the defence of Washington; and some of the graver townsmen, chaffed by his pertinacity, were ill natured enough to say that he was little better than Washington himself. Curious as it may appear, he was, notwithstanding the modern tone of his politics, a rare and singular piece of antiquity;—one of that extinct class of mechanics, described by Coleridge, “to whom every trade was an allegory, and had its own guardian saint.” He was a connecting link between two different worlds,—the worlds of popular opinion and of popular mystery; and, strange as it may seem, both a herald of the Reform Bill, and a last relic of the age “in which” (to use the language of the writer just quoted) “the detail of each art was ennobled in the eyes of its professors by being spiritually improved into symbols and mementos of all doctrines and all duties.” John had, besides, a strong turn for military Architecture, and used to draw plans and construct models. He was one evening descant-

ing to an old campaigner on the admirable works at Fort George (a very recent erection at that time) and illustrating his descriptions with his stick on a hearth-stone strewed over with ashes, when by came the cat, and with one sweep of her tail demolished the entire plan. "Och Donald," said John, "it's all in vain;" a remark which, simple as it may seem, passed into a proverb. When an adventure proved unsuccessful, or an effort unavailing, it was said to be all in vain, like John Holm's plan of the fort. But John's day was at hand.—We, the people, are excellent fellows in our way, but I must confess not very consistent. I have seen the principles which we would hang a man for entertaining on the evening of one day, becoming quite our own before the evening of the next.

The American war was followed by the French Revolution, and the crash of a falling throne awakened opinion all over Europe. The young enquired whether men are not born equal; the old shook their heads, and asked what was to come next? There were gentlemen of the place who began to remark that the tradesfolks no longer doffed to them their bonnets, and tradesfolks that the gentlemen no longer sent them their newspapers. But the people got newspapers for themselves;—these, too, of a very different stamp from the ones they had been accustomed to; and a crop of young Whigs began to shoot up all over the place, like nettles in Spring. They could not break into the meanings of all the new, hard-shelled words they were meeting with,—words ending in *acy* and *archy*; but no people could understand better that a king is only a kind of Justice of the Peace who may be cashiered

for misconduct, just like any other magistrate ; that all men are naturally equal ; and that one whose grandfather had mended shoes was every whit as well born as one whose grandfather was the bastard of an emperor. And seldom were there people more zealous or less selfish in their devotion than the new made politicians of Cromarty. Their own concerns gave place, as they ought, to the more important business of the state ; and they actually hurt their own heads, and sometimes, when the ale was bad, their own bellies, in drinking healths to the French. Light after light gleamed upon them, like star after star in a frosty evening. First of all, Paine's Rights of Man shone upon them through the medium of the newspapers, with the glitter of fifty constellations ; then the Resolutions of the Liberty and Equality clubs of the south looked down upon them with the effulgence of fifty more ; at length, up rose the scheme for the division of property, like the moon at full, and flaring with portentous splendour, cast all the others into comparative obscurity. The people looked round them at the parks which the modern scheme of agriculture had so conveniently fenced in with dikes and hedges ; and spoke of the high price of potato-land and the coming Revolution.—A countryman went into one of the shops, about this time, craving change for a pound note. “ A pound note ! ” exclaimed the merchant ; snapping his fingers ;—“ a pound note !—Man I widna gie you tippence for it.”

There was a young man of the place, the son of a shopkeeper, who had been marked from his earliest boyhood by a singular precocity of intellect, and the

boldness of his opinions ;—his name, (for I must not forget that, to borrow one of Johnson's figures, I am walking over ashes the fires of which are not yet extinguished,) I shall conceal. He was one of those persons who, like the stormy petrel of the tropics, come abroad only when the seas begin to rise, and the heavens to darken ; and who find their proper element in a wild mixture of all the four elements jumbled into one. He read the newspapers, and, it was said, wrote for them ; he corresponded, too, with the Jacobin clubs of the south, and strove to form similar clubs at home ; but the people were not yet sufficiently ripe. No one could say that he was disobliging or ill tempered, on the contrary, he was a favourite with, at least, his humbler townsmen for being much the reverse of both ; but he was poor and talented, and alike impatient of poverty, and of seeing the wealth of the country in the hands of duller men than himself ; and so the man who was unfortunate enough to be born to a thousand pounds a year had little chance of finding him either well tempered or obliging. He had stept into the ferry boat one morning, and the ferrymen had set themselves to their oars, when a neighbouring proprietor came down to the beach, and called on them to return and take him aboard. "Get on," shouted the Democrat, "and let the fellow wait ;—'tis I who have hired you this time." "O Sir, it's a shentleman," said one of the ferrymen, propelling the boat sternwards, as he spoke, by a back stroke of the oar. "Gentleman !" exclaimed the Democrat, seizing the boat-hook and pushing lustily in a contrary direction,— "Gentleman truly !—we are all gentlemen, or shall be so very

soon." The proprietor, meanwhile, made a dash at the rudder, and held fast, but with such goodwill did the other ply the boat-hook, that ere he had made good a lodgement he was drenched to the armpits. "Nothing like being accustomed to hardship in time," muttered the Democrat, as, glancing his eye contemptuously on the dripping vestments of the proprietor, he laid down the pole and quietly resumed his seat.

There were about a dozen young men in the place who were so excited by the newspaper accounts of the superb processions of their south country friends, that they resolved on having a procession of their own. They procured a long pole with a Kil-marnock cap fixed to the one end of it, which they termed the cap of liberty, and a large square of cotton stripped blue, white, and red, which they called the tricolour of independence. In the middle strip there were inscribed in huge Roman capitals, the words Liberty and Equality; and a stuffed cormorant, intended to represent an eagle, was perched on the top of the staff. They got a shipmaster of the place prevailed on to join with them. He was a frank, hearty sailor, who saw nothing unfair in the anticipated division of property, and hated a press-gang as he hated the devil. "But how," said he, "will we manage after all hands have been served out, should a few of us take a bouse, and melt our portions?—just divide again, I suppose."—"Highly probable," replied the revolutionists, "but we have not yet fully determined on that."—"I see, I see," rejoined the sailor, "every thing can't be done at once." On the day of the procession he brought with him his crew attired in their

best, and with all the ship flags mounted on poles. The revolutionists demurred. "To be sure," they said, "nothing could be finer ; but then the flags were British flags." "And —— it," said the master, "would you have me bring French flags !" It was no time, however, to dispute the point ; and the procession moved on, followed by all the children of the place. It reached an eminence directly above the links, and drawing up beside an immense pile of brushwood, and a few empty tar barrels, planted the tree of liberty amid shouts, and music, and the shotting of muskets, on the very spot on which the town gallows had been planted about two centuries before. No one, however, so much as thought of the circumstance ; for people were too thoroughly excited to employ themselves with any thing but the future ;—besides, a very little ingenuity could have made it serve the purpose of either party. After planting the tree, the brushwood was fired, and a cask of whisky produced, out of which the republicans drank healths to liberty and the French. "The French ! the French !" exclaimed the shipmaster, well, —— them, I don't care though I do ;—here's health to the French ; may they and I live long enough to speak to one another through twelve pounders." All the boys and all the sailors huzza'd ;—the republicans said nothing, but thought they had got a rather queer ally. The evening, however, passed off in capital style ; and ere the crowd dispersed, they had burnt two fishing boats, a salmon coble, and almost all the paling of the neighbouring fields and gardens.

The day of the procession was also that of a Red-castle market ;—at that time one of the chief cattle

fairs of the north. It was largely attended, on this occasion, by Highlanders from the neighbouring straths, many of whom had fought for the Prince, and remembered the atrocities of Cumberland; it was attended, too, by parties of drovers from England, and the southern counties of Scotland, all of them brimful of the modern doctrines, and scarcely more loyal than the Highlanders themselves;—it was attended, besides, by a Cromarty salmon fisher, George Hossack, a man of immense personal strength, and high spirit—now a little past his prime, perhaps, but so much a politician of the old school, that he would have willingly fought for his namesake the King, with any two men at the fair. But he was no match for every body, and every body to-day seemed to hold but one opinion, “Terrible expensive government this of ours,” said an East-Lothian drover, “we maun just try whether we canna manage it mair cheaply for ourselves.”—“Ay, and what a blockhead of a king have we got,” said an Englishman; “not fit, as Tom Paine says, for a country constable; but, poor wretch, we must turn him about his business, and see whether he can’t work like ourselves.”—“Och but he’s a limmar, any-how, and a creat plack Whig,” remarked an old Highlander, “and has na right till ta crown.—Na, na, Charlie my king.” Poor George was almost broken hearted by the abuse poured out against his sovereign on every side of him; but what could he do? He would look first at one speaker, then at another, and repress his rising wrath by the consideration that there was little wit in being angry with about three thousand people at once. He had driven a bargain with two

Englishmen, and on going in to drink with them, according to custom, was shewn into a room which chanced at the time, unlike every other room in the house, to be unoccupied. The Englishmen seated themselves at the table; George cautiously fastened the door, and took his place fronting them. "Now, gentlemen," said he, filling the glasses, "permit me to propose a toast:—Health and prosperity to George the Third." He drank off his glass, and set it down before him. One of the Englishmen, a bit of a wag in his way, looked at him with a droll, quizzical expression, and took up his. "Health and prosperity," he said, "to George the *herd*."—"Well, young man," remarked George, "he is, as you say, a herd, and a very excellent one;—allow me, however, to wish him a less unruly charge."—"Health and prosperity," shouted out the other, "to George the ———." This was unbearable: George sprung from his seat, and repaid the insult with a blow on the ear, which drove both man and glass to the floor. Up rose the other Englishman,—up rose, too, the fallen one, and fell together upon George; but the cause of the king was never yet better supported. Down they both went, the one over the other, and down they went a second, and a third, and a fourth time; till, at length, convinced that nothing could be more imprudent than their attempts to rise, they lay just where they fell. George departed, after discharging the reckoning, leaving them to congratulate one another on their liberalism and their wit; and reached Cromarty as the last gleam of the Jacobin bonfire was dancing on the chimney tops, to learn that there was scarcely more loyalty among his townsmen,

than at the market, and that his favourite coble had perished among the flames about two hours before. I remember George—a shrewd, clear-headed man of eighty-two, full of anecdote and remark; and I have derived not a few of my best traditions from him. But he is gone, and wellnigh forgotten:—and when the sexton of some future age shall shovel up his huge bones, the men who come to gaze on them may desecant, as they turn them over, on modern degeneracy, and the might of their fathers, but who among them will know that they belonged to the last of all the loyalists!

The day after the procession came on pregnant with mystery and conjecture. Rider after rider entered the town, and assembled in front of the Council-house;—the town's-officer was sent for, together with the sergeant of a small recruiting party, that barracked in one of the neighbouring lanes; they then entered the hall, and made fast the doors. The country gentlemen, it was said, had come to put down the revolutionists. Shortly after, two of the soldiers and a constable glided into the house of the young democrat, and producing a warrant for his apprehension, and the seizure of all his papers, hurried him away to the hall,—the soldiers with their bayonets fixed, guarding him on either side, the constable, laden with a hamper of books and papers, bringing up the rear. In they all went, and the door closed as before. The curiosity of the townspeople was now awakened in right earnest, and an immense crowd gathered in front of the Council-house; but they could see or hear nothing. At length the door opened, and the sergeant came out; he

looked round him, and beckoned on George Hossack "George," he said, "one of the London smacks has just entered the bay; you must board her and seize on all the parcels addressed to * * * * the Jacobin merchant; there is an information lodged that he is getting a supply of pikes from London for arming the townspeople. Take the custom-house boatmen with you; and bring whatever you find to the hall. And, hark ye, we must see and get up an effigy of the blackguard Tom Paine;—try and procure some oakum and train-oil, and I will furnish powder enough to blow him to Paris." Away went George delighted with the commission, and returned in about an hour after, accompanied by some boatmen bearing two boxes, large enough to contain pistols and pike-heads for all the men of the place. They were admitted into the hall, where they found the bench occupied by the town and country gentlemen,—the soldiers ranged in the area in front, and the Republican, nothing abashed, standing at the bar. He had baffled all his judges, and had given them so much more wit and argument than they wanted, that they had ceased questioning him, and were now employed in turning over his papers. A letter written in cipher had been found on his person, and a gentleman, somewhat skilled in such matters, was examining it with much interest, while his more immediate neighbours were looking over his shoulders. "Bring forward the boxes, George," said one of the gentlemen. George placed them both on the large table fronting the bench, and proceeded to uncord them. The first he opened was filled with gingerbread, the other with girls' dolls and boys' whistles, and an endless vari-

ety of trinkets and toys of a similar class. Some of the elderly gentlemen took snuff and looked at one another;—the younger laughed outright. “Have you deciphered that scrawl, Pointzfield?” enquired one of the more serious, with a view of restoring the court to its gravity. “Yes,” said Pointzfield, drily enough, “I rather think I have.”—“Treasonable, of course,” remarked the other. “No, not quite that now,” rejoined the other, “whatever it might have been fifty years ago. It is merely a copy in short hand of the old Jacobitical ballad, the Sow’s Tail to Geordie.” A titter ran along the bench as before, and the court broke up after determining that the Democrat should be sent to the jail of Tain to abide further trial, and that Paine should be burnt in effigy, at the expense of the County. Paine was accordingly burnt; and all the children were gratified with a second procession and a second bonfire, quite as showy in their way as those of the preceding evening. The prisoner was escorted to Tain by a party of soldiers; and on his release, which took place shortly after, he quitted the country for London, where he became the editor of a thriving newspaper on the popular side, which he conducted for many years with much spirit and ability. Meanwhile the Revolutionary cause languished for lack of a leader; and, on the declaration of war with France, sunk entirely amid the stormy ebullitions of a feeling still more popular than the Republican one.

There are some passions and employments of the human mind which give it a sceptical bias, and others apparently of a very similar nature, which incline it to credulity. So long as the Revolutionary spirit stalked

abroad, it seemed as if every other spirit staid at home. The spectre slept quietly in its church-yard, and the wraith in its pool ; the dead-light was hooded by an extinguisher, and the witch minded her own business without interfering with that of her neighbours. On the breaking out of the war, however, there came on a season of omens and prodigies, and the whole supernatural world seemed starting into as full activity as the fears and hopes of the community. Armies were seen fighting in the air, amid the waving of banners and the frequent flashing of cannon ; and the whole northern sky appeared for three nights together as if deluged with blood. In the vicinity of Inverness, bands of armed men were descried at twilight as if marching across the fields,—at times half enveloped in smoke, at times levelling their arms as if for the charge. There was an ominously warlike spirit, too, among the children, which the elderly people did not at all like ;—they went about, just as before the American war, with their mimic drums and fifes, and their muskets and halberts of elder, disturbing the whole country with uncouth music, and their zeal against the French. Then came the tug of war ; trade sunk ; and many of the mechanics of the place flung aside their tools and entered either the army or the navy. Party spirit died ; the Whigs forgot every thing but that they were Britons ; and when orders came that such of the males of the place as volunteered their services might be embodied into a kind of domestic militia, old men of seventy, and upwards, some of whom had fought at Culloden, and striplings of fifteen, who had not yet left school, came to the house of their future Colonel,

begging to be enrolled, and furnished with arms. In less than two days every man in the town and parish was a soldier. Then came the stories of our great sea victories ; the glare of illuminations and bonfires ; the general anxiety when the intelligence first arrived that a battle had been fought, and the general sadness when it was ascertained that a townsman had fallen. When the news of Duncan's victory came to the town, a little girl, who had a brother among the sailors, ran more than three miles into the country to a field in which her mother was employed in digging potatoes, and falling down at her feet, had just breath enough left to say " mither, mither, the Dutch are beaten, and Sandy's safe." The report of a threatened invasion knit the people still more firmly together, and they began to hate the French, not merely as national, but also as personal enemies. And thus they continued to feel, till, at length, the battle of Waterloo, by terminating the war, reduced them to the necessity of seeking, as before, their enemies at home.

For more than twenty years the words Whig and Tory had wellnigh gone out ; and the younger townsmen were for some time rather doubtful about their meaning. At length, however, they learned that *the Whigs* meant the people, and *the Tories* those who wished to live by them, and yet call them names. The townspeople, therefore, became Whigs to a man ; execrated the Holy Alliance, and the massacre at Manchester ; drunk healths to Queen Caroline and Henry Brougham ; and though they petitioned against Catholic emancipation, for, like most Scotch folks, they had too thorough a respect for their grand-

fathers to be wholly consistent, they were yet shrewd enough to enquire whether any one had ever boasted of his country because the great men opposed to that measure were his countrymen. The Reform Bill, however, set them all right again, by turning them full in the wake of their old leaders ; and yet, no sooner was Whiggism entrusted with the keys of office, than they began to make discoveries which had the effect of considerably modifying the tone of their politics. They began to discover,—will it be believed ! that all men are not born equal ; and that there exists an Aristocracy in the very economy of nature. It was not merely the choice of his countrymen that made Washington a great general, or Franklin a profound statesman. They have also begun to discover, that a good Whig may be a dishonest man ;—nay, that one may be at once Whig and Tory ; a Tory to his servants and dependents, a Whig to his superiors and his country. For my own part I am a Whig,—a born Whig ; but no similarity of political principle will ever lead me to put any confidence in the man to whom I could not entrust my private concerns ; and as for the Whiggism that horse-whipped the poor woman who was picking a few withered sticks out of its hedge, it may wear the laurel leaf and the blue ribbon in any way it pleases, but I assure it, it wo'nt be of my party.

CHAPTER XXIV.

To a mysteriously consorted pair
 This place is consecrate ; to Death and Life,
 And to the best affections that proceed
 From their conjunction.

WORDSWORTH.

WERE I to see a person determined on becoming a hermit, through a disgust of that tame aspect of manners and low tone of feeling which seem the characteristics of what is termed civilized society, I would advise him, instead of retiring into a desert, to take up his place of residence in a country church-yard. Mere solitude cannot surely separate one's thoughts from one's experience ; on the contrary, it will only lead one to think the more of it ; for the less a man has to engage him in the present, the more will he live in the past. And besides, from the very constitution of our nature, what we have seen and felt on any occasion, will be remembered all the more vividly if the sight was hateful or unpleasant to us, and the feeling one of pain. What has annoyed and disgusted us in the city will haunt us in the desert. But though it be thus impossible for us to shut our eyes on the society of men, it is quite in our power, by changing our place of observation, to view the denizens of this society in a different phasis ; and I am of opinion that their aspect appears nowhere more interesting than when viewed from a country church-yard. The field of

graves is a place quite beyond the precincts of the monotonous every-day world ; its more interesting visitors do not seem the people of common every-day life. Grief, like love, is a credulous passion ; its thoughts and language are the thoughts and language of poetry ; its saddest realities glow with the hues of romance ; it lives in a world of its own, peopled with hopes and fears which have become spiritual existences ; and, while it imparts the splendours of Elysium to the scenes of the past, and the gloom of Tartarus to those of the future, it thinks, amid its tears, of a far different future, which has become the present to those whom it mourns, and in which the enjoyments of the past are more than doubled. What wonder then that the more interesting visitors of the church-yard should seem a different class of beings from the people of common life. Instead of hearing them enquire in the manner of the modern Sadducee, whether there be angel or spirit, we see, that not only do they believe in the separate existence of the soul, but also, in many instances, in what is told of its occasional visits from the world of the departed to the world of men. Instead of being compelled to hate them for their apathy and indifference, we find that they are susceptible of grief, and have been softened by bereavement into tenderness and sympathy ;—by the sadness of the countenance, says Solomon, the heart is made better. Instead of having to deplore their low scorn of religion, we perceive that their only hope and solace is in accordance to its sanction. What is still better, we find a reciprocity of feeling awakened in ourselves. Without having recourse to the phantasies of poetry, we are

transported to the regions of romance ; without imagining anything higher of our brethren of mankind than is really to be found among them, our better sympathies are awakened in their behalf ; without abstracting ourselves from the influence of example we are incited to the practice of virtue.

There is no personage of real life who can be more properly regarded as a hermit of the church-yard than the itinerant sculptor, who wanders from one country burying ground to another, recording on his tablets of stone the tears of the living, and the worth of the dead. If possessed of a common portion of feeling and imagination, he cannot fail of deeming his profession a school of benevolence and poetry. For my own part, I have seldom thrown aside the hammer and trowel of the stone mason, for the chisel of the itinerant sculptor, without receiving some fresh confirmation of the opinion. How often have I suffered my mallet to rest on the unfinished epitaph, when listening to some friend of the buried expatiating with all the eloquence of grief on the mysterious warning, and the sad death-bed, on the worth that had departed, and the sorrow that remained behind ! How often, forgetting that I was merely an auditor, have I so identified myself with the mourner, as to feel my heart swell, and my eyes becoming moist ! Even the very aspect of a solitary church-yard seems conducive to habits of thought and feeling. I have risen from my employment to mark the shadow of tombstone and burial mound creeping over the sward at my feet, and have been rendered serious by the reflection, that as those gnomons of the dead marked out no line of hours, though

the hours passed as the shadows moved, so, in that eternity in which even the dead exist, there is a nameless tide of continuity, but no division of time. I have become sad, when looking on the green mounds around me, I have regarded them as waves of triumph which time and death had rolled over the wreck of man; and the feeling has been deepened, when looking down with the eye of imagination through this motionless sea of graves, I have marked the sad remains of both the long departed, and the recent dead, thickly strewed over the bottom.—I have grieved above the half soiled shroud of her for whom the tears of bereavement had not yet been dried up, and sighed over the mouldering bones of him whose very name had long since perished from the earth.

Not long ago I wrought for about a week in the burying ground of Kirk Michael, a ruinous chapel in the eastern extremity of the parish of Resolis, and distant about six miles from the town of Cromarty. It is a pleasant solitary spot, lying on the sweep of a gentle declivity. The sea flows to within a few yards of the lower wall, but the beach is so level, and so little exposed to the winds, that even in the time of tempest there is heard within its precincts only a faint rippling murmur, scarcely loud enough to awaken the echoes of the ruin. Ocean seems to muffle his waves in approaching this field of the dead. A row of elms springs out of the fence, and half encircles the building in the centre. Standing beside the mouldering walls of the latter, the foreground of the scene appears thickly sprinkled over with graves and tablets; and we see the green moss creeping round the rude sculp-

tures of a primitive age, imparting lightness and beauty to that on which the chisel had bestowed quite an opposite character. The flake-like leaves and gnarled trunks of the elms fill up what a painter would term the midground of the picture ; and seen from between the boughs, the bay of Cromarty, shut in by the Sutors, so as to present the appearance of a huge lake, and the town beyond half enveloped in blue smoke,—the windows sparkling through the cloud like spangles on a belt of azure, occupy the distance.

The western gable of the ruin is still entire, though the very foundations of part of the walls can no longer be traced on the sward, and it is topped by a belfrey of hewn stone, in which the *dead bell* is still suspended. From the spires and balls with which the cornice is surmounted, the moss and lichens which bristle over the mouldings, and the stalks of ragweed which shoot out here and there from between the joints, the belfrey, though designed in a barbarous style of architecture, is rich in the true picturesque. It furnished me, when the wind blew from the east, with an agreeable music, not, indeed, either gay or very varied, but of a character which suited well with that of the place. I wrought directly under it, and frequently paused in my labours to hearken the blast moaning amid its spires, and whistling through its apertures ; and have occasionally been startled by the mingling death-like tones produced by the hammer, when forced by the wind against the sides of the bell. I was one day listening to this music, when, by one of those freaks which fling the light of recollection upon the dark recesses of the past, much in the manner that I have seen a child throwing the gleam of a mirror from the sunshine into

the shade, there were brought before me the circumstances of a dream, deemed prophetic of the death of him whose epitaph I was then inscribing. It was one of those auguries of contingency which, according to Bacon, men mark when they hit, and never mark when they miss.

In the latter part of 1822 a young lad, a mason's apprentice, was employed with his master in working within the policies of Pointzfield,—a gentleman's seat about a mile from the burying-ground. He wished much to visit the tombs and chapel, but could find no opportunity, for the day had so shortened that his employments engaged him from the first peep of light in the morning, until half an hour after sunset. And perhaps the wish was the occasion of the dream. He had no sooner fallen asleep, after the fatigues of the day, than he found himself approaching the chapel, as he thought, in one of the finest of midsummer evenings. The whole western heavens were suffused with the blush of sunset,—the hills, the woods, the fields, the sea, all the limbs and members of the great frame of nature seemed enveloped in a mantle of beauty. He reached the burying-ground, and deemed it the loveliest spot he had ever seen. The tombs were finished after the most exquisite designs, chastely Grecian, or richly Gothic ; and myriads of flowering shrubs winded around the urns, and shaded the tablets in every disposition of beauty. There was a profusion of roses, mingled with large spreading flowers of a vivid blue. The building seemed entire, but it was so encrusted with moss and lichens as to present an appearance of extreme antiquity ; on the western gable there was fixed a huge gnomon of bronze. Suddenly

a low breeze began to moan through the shrubs and bushes, the heavens became overcast, and the dreamer turning towards the building, with a sensation of fear, beheld the gnomon revolving slowly as on an axis, until the point rested on the sward. He fled the place, and when floundering on in darkness and terror, as he thought, through a morass that stretches beyond the southern wall of the chapel, he awoke. Only five weeks elapsed from the evening of his dream, until he followed to this burying-ground the corpse of a relative, and saw that the open grave occupied the identical spot on which the point of the gnomon had rested.

During the course of the week which I spent in the burying-ground, I became acquainted with several interesting traditions connected with its inhabitants. There are some of these which shew how very unlike the beliefs entertained in the ages which have departed, are to those deemed rational in the present; others which render it evident that though men at different eras think and believe differently, human nature always remains the same. The following partakes in part of the character of both.

There lived, about a century ago, in the upper part of the parish of Cromarty, an elderly female of that disposition of mind which Bacon describes as one of the very errors of human nature. Her faculties of enjoyment and suffering seemed connected by some invisible tie to the fortunes of her neighbours; but this tie, unlike that of sympathy, which binds pleasure to pleasure, and sorrow to sorrow, by a strange perversity united to each other the opposite feelings.

She was happy when the people around her were unfortunate, and miserable when they prospered. So decided a misanthropy was met by a kindred feeling in those acquainted with her ; nor was she regarded with only that abhorrence which attaches to the evil wish, and the malignant intention, but also with the contempt due to that impotency of malice which can only wish and intend.

Her sphere of mischief, however, though limited by her circumstances, was occupied to its utmost boundary ; and she frequently made up for her want of power by an ingenuity, derived from what seemed in her an almost instinctive knowledge of the weaknesses of human nature. It was difficult to tell how she effected her schemes, but certain it was that in her neighbourhood lovers became estranged, and families divided. Late in the autumn of her last year, she formed one of a band of reapers employed in cutting down the crops of a Cromarty farmer. Her partner on the ridge was a poor widow, who had recently lost her husband, and who, though wasted by grief and sickness, was now toiling for her three helpless orphans. Every person on the field pitied her but one ; and the malice of even that one, perverted as her dispositions were, would, probably, have been disarmed by the helplessness of its object, had it not chanced, that, about five years before, when the poor woman and her deceased husband were on the eve of their marriage, she had attempted to break off the match, by casting some foul aspersions on her character. Those whom the wicked injure, says the adage, they never forgive ; and with a demoniac abuse of her knowledge

of the dispositions of the people with whom she wrought, she strained beyond her strength to get ahead of them, knowing that a competition would necessarily take place, in which, she trusted, the widow would either have to relinquish her employment, as above her strength, or so exhaust herself in the contest as to relapse into sickness. The expected struggle ensued, but, to the surprise of every one, the widow kept up her place in the foremost rank until evening, when she appeared less fatigued than almost any of the party. The wretch who had occasioned it, and who had fallen behind all the others, seemed dreadfully agitated for the two last hours it continued ; and she was heard by the persons who bound up the sheaves, muttering, the whole time, words, apparently, of fearful meaning, which, however, were drowned amid the rustling of the corn, and the hurry and confusion of the competition. Next morning she alone of all the reapers was absent ; and she was found by the widow, who seemed the only one solicitous to know what had become of her, and who first entered her hovel to enquire after her, tossing in the delirium of a fever. The poor woman, though shocked and terrified by her ravings, and her agony, tended her till within half an hour of midnight, when she expired.

At that late hour a solitary traveller was passing the road which winds along the southern shore of the bay. The moon, in her last quarter, had just risen over the hill on her right, and, half veiled by three strips of cloud, rather resembled a heap of ignited charcoal seen through the bars of a grate, than the orb which only a few nights before had enabled the reaper to

prosecute his employments until near morning. The blocks of granite scattered over the neighbouring beach, and bleached and polished by the waves, were relieved by the moonshine, and resembled flocks of sheep ruminating on a meadow ; but not a single ray rested on the sea beyond, or the path or fields before ;—the beam slided ineffectual along the level ;—it was light looking at darkness. On a sudden, the traveller became conscious of that strange mysterious emotion which, according to the creed of the demonologist, indicates the presence or near approach of an evil spirit. He felt his whole frame as if creeping together, and his hair bristling on his head, and, filled with a strange horror, he heard, through the dead stillness of the night, a faint, uncertain noise, like that of a sudden breeze rustling through a wood at the close of autumn. He blessed himself, and stood still. A tall figure, indistinct in the darkness, came gliding along the road from the east, and enquired of him, as it floated past, in a voice hollow and agitated, whether it could not reach Kirk-Michael before midnight ? “ No living person could,” answered the traveller ; and the appearance, groaning at the reply, was out of sight in a moment. The sounds still continued as if a multitude of leaves were falling from the boughs of a forest, and striking with a pattering sound on the heaps congregated beneath, when another figure came up, taller, but even less distinct, than the former. It bore the appearance of a man on horseback.—“ Shall I reach Kirk-Michael before midnight ?” was the query again put to the terrified traveller ; but before he could reply to it the appearance had vanished in

the distance ; and a shriek of torment and despair, which seemed re-echoed by the very firmament, roused him into a more intense feeling of horror. The moon shone out with supernatural brightness ; the noise, which had ceased for a moment, returned, but the sounds were different, for they now seemed to be those of faint laughs, and low indistinct mutterings in the tone of ridicule, and the gigantic rider of a pale horse, with the appearance of a female bent double before him, and accompanied by two dogs, one of which tugged at the head, and the other at the feet of the appearance, was seen approaching from the west. As this terrible apparition passed the traveller, the moon shone full on the face of the figure on the horse, and he distinctly perceived, though the features seemed convulsed with agony, that they were those of the female who, unknown to him, had expired a few minutes before. None of the other stories are of so terrible a character.

Attached to the eastern gable of the ruin, there is a tomb which encloses several monuments, among the rest a plain slab of marble bearing an epitaph, the composition of which would reflect no disgrace on the pen of Pope. Like most of the other tablets of this burying ground it has its history. Somewhat more than fifty years ago, the proprietor of Newhall, an estate in the neighbourhood, was a young man of very superior powers of mind, and both a gentleman and a scholar. When on a visit at the house of his uncle, the proprietor of Invergordon, he was suddenly taken ill, and died a few hours after, leaving behind him a sister, who entertained for him the warmest affection,

and the whole of his tenants, who were much attached to him, to regret his loss. He was buried in the family vault of his uncle, who did not long survive him ; and whose estate, including the vault, was sold soon after by the next of kin ; a circumstance which aggravated, in no slight degree, the grief of his sister. There was one gloomy idea that continually occupied her mind,—the idea that even the dust of her brother had, like the very earth and stones of the vault, become the property of a stranger. Sleeping or waking the interior of this vault was continually before her. I have seen it.—It is a damp, melancholy apartment of stone, so dimly lighted that the eye cannot ascertain its extent, with the sides hollowed into recesses, partly occupied by the dead, and a few rusty iron lamps suspended from the ceiling,—resembling in the darkness a family of vampire bats clinging to the roof of a cavern. A green hillock covered with moss and daisies, would have supplied the imagination of the mourner with a more pleasing image, and would have associated better with the character of the dead.

His sister was the wife of a gentleman who was at that time the proprietor of Braelanguil. One evening, about half a year after the sale of her uncle's property, she was prevailed upon by her husband to quit her apartment, to which she had been confined for months before, and walk with him to the neighbouring wood. She spoke of the virtues and talents of the deceased, the only theme from which she could derive any pleasure ; and she found that evening in her companion a more deep and tender sympathy than usual. The walk was insensibly prolonged, and she was only awakened

from her reverie of tenderness and sorrow, by finding herself among the graves of Kirk Michael. The door of her husband's burying ground lay open. On entering it she perceived that a fresh grave had been added to the number of those which had previously occupied the space, and that one of the niches in the wall was filled up by a new slab of marble. It was the grave and monument of her brother. The body had been removed from the vault, and reinterred in this place by her consort ; and it would perhaps be difficult to decide whether the more delicate satisfaction was derived by the sister or the husband from the walk of this evening.—The epitaph is as follows :

What science crown'd him, or what genius blest,
No flattering pencil bids this stone attest ;
Yet may it witness with a purer pride,
How many virtues sunk when Gordon died.
Clear truth and nature, noble rays of mind,
Open as day, that beamed on all mankind ;
Warm to oblige, too gentle to offend,
He never made a foe nor lost a friend.
Nor yet from fortune's height, or learning's shade,
It boasts the tribute to his memory paid ;
But that around, in grateful sorrow steep'd,
The humble tenants of the cottage wept ;
Those simple hearts that shrink from grandeur's blaze,
Those artless tongues that know not how to praise,
Feel and record the worth that hallow here
A friend's remembrance, and a sister's tear.

CHAPTER XXV.

Scotland has her Munros.

DEFOE.

HALF way between the chapel and the northern wall of the burying ground, there is a square, altar-like monument of hewn ashlar, enclosing in one of the sides a tablet of grey freestone. It was erected about sixty years ago by a baronet of Fowlis, to the memory of his aunt, Mrs Gordon of Ardoch, a woman whose singular excellence of character is recorded by the pen of Dodridge. She was the only sister of three brothers,—men who ranked among the best and bravest of their age, and all of whom died in the service of their country,—two in the field of battle, the other when pursuing a flying enemy.

The eldest of this family was Sir Robert Munro, twenty-seventh Baronet of Fowlis, a man whose achievements, as recorded by even the sober pen of Dodridge, seem fitted to associate rather with ideas derived from the high conceptions of poetry and romance, than with those which we usually acquire from our experience of real life. He was a person of calm wisdom, determined courage, and unassuming piety. On quitting the University, which he did when very young, he passed into Flanders, where he served for several years under Marlborough, and became intimate with the celebrated James Gardiner, then a Cornet of

Dragoons. This intimacy ripened into a friendship which did not terminate until death,—perhaps not even then. On the peace of 1712 he returned to Scotland;—the Rebellion broke out three years after. At the head of his clan, and in union with the good Earl of Sutherland, he so harassed a body of three thousand Highlanders, who, under the Earl of Seaforth, were on the march to join the insurgents at Perth, that the junction was retarded for nearly two months; a delay which seems to have decided the fate of the Stuarts in Scotland. In the following year he was appointed one of the Commissioners of enquiry into the forfeited estates of the attainted; and he exerted himself in this office in erecting parishes in the remote Highlands, which derived their stipends from the confiscated lands. In this manner, says his biographer, new presbyteries were formed in counties where the discipline and worship of Protestant Churches had before no footing. It is added, that by his influence with government he did eminent service to the wives and children of the proscribed. He was for thirty years a member of Parliament, and distinguished himself as a liberal and consistent Whig,—the friend both of the people and of the king. In the year 1740, when the country was on the eve of what he deemed a just war, though he had arrived at an age at which the soldier commonly begins to think of retiring from the fatigues of the military life, he quitted the business of the senate for the dangers of the field, and passed a second time into Flanders. He now held the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, and such was his influence over the soldiers under him, and such their admiration

of his character, that his spirit and high sense of honour seemed to pervade the whole regiment. When a guard was granted to the people of Flanders for the protection of their property, they prayed that it should be composed of Sir Robert's Highlanders; and the Elector Palatine, through his Envoy at the English court, tendered to George I. his thanks for this excellent regiment; for the sake of whose Lieutenant-Colonel, it was added, he would for the future always esteem a Scotchman.

The life of Sir Robert resembled a well wrought drama, whose scenes become doubly interesting as it hastens to a close. In the battle of Fontenoy he was among the first in the field, and having obtained leave that his Highlanders should fight after the manner of their country, he surprised the whole army by a display of extraordinary, yet admirable tactics, directed against the enemy with the most invincible courage. He dislodged from a battery, which he was ordered to attack, a force superior to his own, and found the main body of the French, who were deeply entrenched beyond it, preparing to fire. Commanding his men to prostrate themselves to avoid the shot, he raised them when the enemy were in the act of reloading, and rushed down upon the latter with so irresistible a charge as forced them precipitately through their lines. Then retreating, according to the manner of Highlanders, he again brought them to the charge as before, and with similar effect. And this manœuvre of alternate flight and attack was frequently repeated during the day. When, after the battle had become general, the English began to give ground before the

superior force of the enemy, Sir Robert's regiment formed the rear guard in the retreat. A strong body of French horse came galloping up behind, but, when within a few yards of the Highlanders, the latter turned suddenly round, and received them with a fire so well directed and effectual, that nearly one half of them were dismounted. The rest, wheeling about, rode off, and did not again return to the attack. It was observed, that during the course of this day, when the Highlanders had thrown themselves on the ground immediately as the enemy had levelled their pieces for firing, there was one person of the regiment who, instead of prostrating himself with the others, stood erect, exposed to the whole volley. That one was Sir Robert Munro. The circumstances of his death, which took place about eight months after at the battle of Falkirk, were adapted to display still more his indomitable heroism of character. He had recently been promoted to the command of a regiment, which, unlike his brave Highlanders at Fontenoy, deserted him in the moment of attack, and left him enclosed by the enemy. Defending himself with his half pike against six of their number, two of whom he killed, he was not overpowered, though alone, until a seventh coming up shot him dead with a musket. His younger brother who accompanied the regiment, and who had been borne along by the current of the retreat, returned in time only to witness his fate and to share it.

The present age is not, even in the Highlands, the age of tradition; and that spirit which led Scotchmen of the last century to regard the achievements of the brave and excellent of their countrymen, as reflecting

honour on themselves, is fast evaporating, leaving behind it a residuum of apathetical indifference, alike uncongenial to the growth of courage, and the interests of morality. The achievements of Sir Robert are almost forgotten by the grandchildren of men who would have deemed it happiness to have purchased his life at the expense of their own. It has been told me by a friend, who, about forty years ago, resided, for some time, in the vicinity of Fowlis, that he could have collected, at that period, anecdotes of him from among his tenantry, sufficient to have filled a volume. They were all of one character:—tints of varied, but unequivocal beauty, which animated into the colour and semblance of life, the faint outline of heroism traced out by Dodridge. There was an old man who used to sit by my friend for hours together, narrating the exploits of Sir Robert. He was a tall, upright, grey-haired Highlander, of a warm heart, and keen, unbending spirit; and he had fought at Dettington, Fontenoy, Culloden, and Quebec. One day, when describing the closing scene in the life of his almost idolized chief, after pouring out his curse on the dastards who had deserted him, he started from his seat, and grasping his staff as he burst into tears, exclaimed in a voice almost smothered by emotion, “Ochon, ochon, had his ain folk been there !!”

The following anecdote of Sir Robert, which I owe to tradition, sets his character in a very amiable light. On his return from Flanders in 1712, he was introduced to a Miss Jean Seymour, a beautiful English lady. The young soldier was smitten by her appearance, and had the happiness of perceiving that he had suc-

ceeded in at least attracting her notice. So happy an introduction was followed up into intimacy, and, at length, what had been only a casual impression on either side, was ripened into a mutual passion of no ordinary warmth and delicacy. On Sir Robert's quitting England for the north he arranged with his mistress the plan of a regular correspondence, and wrote to her immediately on his arrival at Fowlis. After waiting for a reply with all the impatience of the lover, he sent off a second letter complaining of her neglect, which had no better success, and shortly after a third, which shared the fate of the two others. The inference seemed too obvious to be missed, and he strove to forget Miss Seymour. He hunted, he fished, he visited his several friends, he involved himself in a multiplicity of concerns, but all to no purpose, she still continued the engrossing object of his affections, and after a few months stay in the Highlands, during which his very character seemed to have undergone a radical change for the worse, he again returned to England. When waiting on a friend in London, he was ushered precipitately into the midst of a fashionable party, and found himself in the presence of his mistress. She seemed much startled by the rencounter; the blood mounted to her cheeks; but suppressing her emotion by a strong effort, she turned to the lady who sat next her, and began to converse on some common topic of the day. Sir Robert retired, and beckoning on his friend, entreated him to procure for him an interview with Miss Seymour. This was effected, and an explanation ensued. The lady had not received a single letter, and forming,

at length, from the seeming neglect of her lover, an opinion of him similar to that from which she herself was suffering in his esteem, she attempted to banish him from her affections, an attempt, however, in which she had been scarcely more successful than Sir Robert. They were gratified to find that they had not been mistaken in their first impressions of each other, and parted more attached, and more convinced that the attachment was mutual than ever. In less than a month after Miss Seymour became Lady Munro.

Sir Robert succeeded in tracing all his letters to one point, a kind of post office in the confines of Inverness-shire. There was a proprietor in this neighbourhood, who was deeply engaged in the interests of the Stuarts, and decidedly hostile to Sir Robert, the scion of a family which had distinguished itself from the first dawn of the Reformation, in the cause of civil and religious liberty. There was, therefore, little difficulty in assigning an author to the contrivance ; but Sir Robert was satisfied in barely tracing it to a discovery ; for, squaring his principles of honour rather by the morals of the New Testament, than by the dogmas of that code which regards death as the only expiation of insult or injury, he was no duellist. An opportunity, however, soon occurred of his avenging himself in a manner agreeable to his character and principles. On the breaking out of the rebellion of 1715, the person who had so wantonly sported with his happiness joined with the Earl of Mar, and, after the failure of the enterprize, was among the number of the proscribed. Sir Robert's influence with the government, and the peculiar office to which he was

appointed, gave him considerable power over the confiscated property, and this power he exerted to its utmost in behalf of the wife and children of the man by whom he had been injured. "Tell your husband," said he to the lady, "that I have now repaid him for the interest he took in my correspondence with Miss Seymour."

Sir Robert's second brother, (the other, as has been related, died with him at Falkirk), was killed, about seven months after the battle, in the Highlands of Lochaber. His only sister survived him for nearly twenty years, "a striking example (I use the language of Dodridge) of profound submission and fortitude, mingled with the most tender sensibility of temper." She was the wife of a Mr. Gordon of Ardoch, (now Pointzfield), whom she survived for several years; and her latter days were spent in Cromarty; where there are still a few elderly people who remember her, and speak of her many virtues, and mild, condescending manners, with a feeling bordering on enthusiasm. There was a poor, half-witted girl who lived in her neighbourhood, known, among the townspeople, by the name of *Babble Hanah*. The word in Italics is a Scottish phrase applied to persons of an idiotical cast of mind; and yet, though poor Hanah had no claim to dispute the propriety of its application in her own case, her faint glimmering of reason proved quite sufficient to light her on the best possible track of life. She had learned from revelation of the immortality of the soul, and the two states of the future; and experience had taught even her, what, indeed, it would teach every one, did every one but attend to its lessons, that there

is a radical depravity in the nature of man, and a continual succession of evil in the course of life. She had learned, too, that she was one of the least wise of a class of creatures exceedingly foolish at best, and that to escape from evil needed much wisdom. She was, therefore, earnest in her prayers to the Great Spirit who was so very kind to her, and to even those feeble animals, who, though they enjoy no boon of after life, have a wisdom to provide for the winter, and to dig their houses in the rocks, that in this world he would direct her walk agreeable to his own will, and render her wiser in the world to come. Socrates could have taught all this to Xenophon and Plato, but God only could have taught it to Hanah. The people of the place, with dispositions like those of the great bulk of people in every place, were much more disposed to laugh at the poor thing for what she wanted, than to form right estimates of the value of what she had. Not so Lady Ardoch — ; Hanah was one of her friends. Her house was a place where, in the language of Scripture, “prayer was wont to be made ;” and no one was a more regular attendant on the meetings held for this purpose, than her friend the half-witted girl. The poor thing always sat at her feet, and was termed by her, her own Hanah. Years, however, began to weigh down the frame of the good lady, and after passing through all the gradations of bodily decay with a mind which seemed to brighten and grow stronger as it neared to eternity, she at length slept with her fathers. Hanah betrayed no emotion of grief ; she spoke to no one of the friend she had lost ; but she moped and pined away, and

became indifferent to every thing ; and a few months after, when on her death-bed, she told a friend of the deceased, who had come to visit her, that she was going to the country of Lady Ardoch.

The story of *Babble* Hanah half completes my Traditional History, and of some histories the half is better than the whole ; mine is, perhaps, one of these ; and so, before setting myself to write any more of Cromarty or its inhabitants, I deem it prudent to ascertain whether I may not have written enough on the subject already. The dark periods of doubt and dissertation are passed through ; there are stirring times before me, and many a story of the witch, and the fairy, and the churchyard spectre, that have been consigned to the burial vaults of the past. Possibly enough, however, the great bulk of our north-country stories may be unworthy of being resuscitated, and were it otherwise it is but too probable that the individual on whom circumstances have conferred an ability of penetrating to where they are laid, is yet unable to re-animate them ; for it is one thing to restore the dead to life, and quite another merely to rake up their ashes. What I have written is now submitted to the public as data on which its decision on these points may be grounded ; and sure I am that that decision, whether favourable or otherwise, cannot be other than just.

THE END.



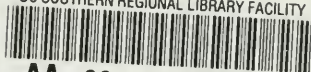


University of California, Los Angeles



L 007 270 079 2

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 001 158 053 7

